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THE

ANCIENT HISTORY

OF

ASIA,

45706

AND

REMARKS ON THE ATLANTIS OF PLATO;

TO WHICH ARE ADDED,

OBSERVATIONS ON THE LEARNING OF THE ANCIENT BRAHMANS;

IN A SERIES OF LETTERS ADDRESSED TO

M. DE VOLTAIRE.

BY M. BAILLY.

WITH THE LIFE OF THE AUTHOR.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

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LETTERS,

&c. &c.

FOURTH LETTER FROM M. DE VOLTAIRE TO M. BAILLY.

Ferney, 27th Feb. 1777.

Tradidit mundum disputationi eorum.

I DO not mean to dispute with you; I only seek for information. I am an old blind man, who asks you the way. No man is better qualified than yourself to rectify my ideas, with respect to the Brahmans.

I am astonished, that no Frenchman has had the curiosity to learn at Benares the ancient sacred language, as Messrs. Holwel and Dow have done.

1st. The book of the Shastah, written near 5000 years ago, is not of such sublimity, as would lead us to think that the authors possessed genius and science *.

2d. Is

* The book of the Shastah is full of fables, it is true; but it begins by that important truth, that God is incomprehensible, and that man must

2d. Is it a fact, that the Brahmans of the present day have neither science nor genius* ?

3d. If they degenerated under the tyranny of the descendants of Tamerlan, is not this the natural effect of what we observe in Greece and Rome† ?

4th. Would Zoroaster and Pythagoras have undertaken so formidable a journey, in order to consult

not attempt to sound the depth of his essence: man, who made God after his own image, would necessarily be a long time before he got that length. This truth, as it occurred without the aid of a revelation, could only be the work of philosophy, and the result of a profound system of metaphysics—(first letters to M. De Voltaire, p. 75.)—We find in the three Gods of the Indians, the three acts of the Divine Power, which produced, which preserves, and which will destroy, the world. If those great views are accompanied by fables, it is because they were added by the Indians. The people who invented those fables, could have no hand in the invention of those truths. This will suffice to prove, that the Indians have neither science nor genius; and it is an answer to the second objection.

* See also p. 88, of the first Letters to M. De Voltaire.

† I do not say, that the degeneracy of the Indians took place under the tyranny of Tamerlan: I speak of an epoch of much higher antiquity. I say, that time has contributed its usual influence to that of revolution. I am sensible, that Greece and Rome might degenerate ever so much; their monuments remain: we discover vestiges of wit and genius of the same nations, in the same climate; but when a people migrate to a different part of the globe, when they are transplanted, and when a new climate has extinguished their genius, they have then nothing left. The monuments continue to be the property of their original country, or are destroyed by time. heaven and earth have operated a change in their minds; and it is in this manner that nations degenerate.

ther

them, if they had not been reputed the most enlightened of the human race *?

5th. Are not their three vice-gods, or subordinate deities, *Brahma*, Vistnou, and Routren, the former, the restorer, and destroyer, the origin of the three destinies †?

Clotho colum retinet, Lachesis net, Atropos occat.

Is not the war of Moïsasor, and the rebel angels, against the Eternal, evidently the model of the war of Briareus and the giants against Jupiter?

6th. Ought we not to presume, that those inventors lighted also, in that beautiful climate, on the invention of astronomy; since they had more want of astronomy for the regulation of their labours and festivals, than of fables for the government of the people ‡?

7th. If

* If Zoroaster consulted the Brahmans, it was undoubtedly the modern Zoroaster. The homage of this legislator, as well as that of the philosopher Pythagoras, are a proof that the Brahmans had the reputation of men of learning; but learning is relative. One may lose a great deal, and still be rich, compared with a man who has nothing.

† It is very possible, that the three gods of the Indians are the origin of the destinies of mythology. The war of Moïsasor may have been the model of the war of Briareus, and the other giants, against Jupiter. I think with M. De Voltaire, that philosophy and fables came to us from the East, and particularly from India. We differ in this, that he is persuaded it was there that every thing was invented: I consider philosophy as an exotic in that country, and the fables as native plants.

‡ The want of things, no doubt, creates the necessity of inventing them; but what is necessary is not always practicable. We have more

7th. If it was a nation of foreigners who communicated instruction, should we not find at Benares some traces of that event? Messrs. Holwel and Dow say not one word on the subject *.

8th. I admit, it is possible that an ancient people may have instructed the Indians; but are we not permitted to doubt of it, since we have no notice of that ancient people †?

This,

want of astronomy, for the regulation of labour and industry, than of fables, for the government of the people; but fables, though ever founded in something real at bottom, are the work of the imagination. The truths of science are the result of time, labour, and genius. The imagination amuses itself, previous to the age of reason: the full grown man, occupied in the pursuits of science, does not return to the trivial pastimes of his childish years. It is precisely because the Indians invented fables, that they have neither invented nor perfected astronomy.

* In countries which have not acquired the art of printing, numberless things are lost, and vanish. Men commit to writing what is deemed of importance; every thing else is forgotten. A foreign nation might instruct India, without there remaining the smallest vestiges of that ancient event: national vanity has an interest in effacing its remembrance. How many men live in the fruition of benefits they have received, without mentioning their benefactors? Besides, Messrs. Holwel and Dow resided and acquired information in India, and yet there might be many things of which they were ignorant. A stranger might pass many years at Paris, and not learn all that is contained in our archives. Though these reasons might suffice to account for the silence of the Indians, respecting that ancient tutelage, I must observe, that it is unnecessary to travel to India, in order to discover its traces.—See the first of the following Letters.

† It is permitted to doubt of that instruction, since we have no notice of that ancient lost people. To doubt, is always permitted in matters of science: it is the touch-stone of truth. Still, however, doubting has its limits: every species of truth is not susceptible of demonstration,

like

This, Sir, is a kind of abstract of the doubts I have entertained on the subject of the philosophy of the Brahmans, and which I submit to your judgment. I confess to you, that I never read the system of M. De Mairan, on the internal heat of the earth, compared with that which the sun produces in summer. I have only been satisfied, in general, that fire exists every where.

Ignis ubique latet, naturam amplectitur omnem.

The artichokes and asparagus which I have eaten this year, in the month of January, in the midst of frost and snow, and which were produced without one ray of the sun, or an atom of artificial fire, sufficiently convince me that the earth contains a very strong intrinsic heat. What you observe in your

like that of mathematics. The human race would be too great losers, by confining themselves to this species alone: testimonies balanced, probabilities duly weighed, fables compared and illustrated one by another, form, when united, a strong light, which may lead to complete evidence; and when philosophy, with these aids, arrives at conclusions founded in the nature of man and of things, we have reason to believe, and not to doubt; we have no occasion to be told the name of a people, in order to acknowledge the truth of their existence and their labours. Asia, at this day, is full of notices of that people: the conformities among the nations we know, constitute these notices: wise institutions of high antiquity, and coeval with the very origin of oriental nations, are notices of a people who were the authors of those institutions. Large edifices are the workmanship not of the rising generation, but of that which is gone: a palace was never built by the hands of children.

Ninth Letter, has afforded much more instruction than I derived from my kitchen-garden.

Your two books, Sir, are treasures of the profoundest erudition, and of the most ingenious conjecture, adorned with a style truly eloquent, which is uniformly appropriate to the subject.

I thank you, above all, for your last volume. Men will deem me worthy to have you for my master; since it is to me you address books, in which the whole world will find instruction.

Accept the gratitude and respectful esteem of your most humble and most obedient servant,

The Old Invalid, VOLTAIRE.

Puer centum annorum.

ELEVENTH LETTER FROM M. BAILLY TO M. DE VOLTAIRE.

[Exposition of the subject of the following Letters: first example of a lost people.]

Paris, 16th Jan. 1775.

PERMIT me, Sir, to renew a correspondence which does me so much honour. I have a sincere pleasure in offering you the homage of my ideas. Prepossessed as you are in favour of the Brahmans, you shall still be judge between those sages, so justly admired, and a learned, though unknown, people, whom you will not acknowledge. I confess it is difficult to take an interest in a people to whom we are strangers. We are continually the dupes of our senses. You have been used to converse with those wise men, the preceptors of Pythagoras; you have seen them with his eyes; you have read their writings. In your admiration of their wisdom, you have conceived a love and veneration for those who practised it: you are unwilling to dispossess them for instructors, lost in the darkness of antiquity, forgotten from the ingratitude of men, and whose name, with

almost every memorial of their existence, the hand of time has obliterated. In reading history, we form our society, and we make a selection of our friends. Man is so strongly inclined to cohabit with his fellow men, and to exercise his affections towards them, that when they no longer exist, the interest they excite in his bosom, exists still: even in the silence and retirement of the closet, his passions catch fire from the narrative: he surrounds himself with a circle of characters, whose names and memorable things he learns from the historian: he lives with them, and is seduced by his sympathy in the vicissitude of their fortunes. If we love Belisarius, we will hate his enemies. The great talents and splendid accomplishments of Cæsar, obtain him warm advocates at this day: alone, and with the book in my hand, I am still interested for the success of his enterprizes, though atchieved eighteen hundred years ago: I forget that he wished to subvert the republic, and triumph over the freedom of his country; and I sigh for the assassination which, for the moment, rescued it out of his hands.

It is therefore very plain, Sir, that you have been in love with the ancient Brahmans. Your affections draw you on the side of wisdom and science: but your friends the Brahmans are but striplings, compared with their ancient masters. The antiquity of the old friends of my choice, render them the more

respect-

respectable. Friendship, at the same time that it is an inclination of the heart, implies a sentiment of respect; a respect which is enhanced by old age. I figure to myself those primitive philosophers with a grave demeanor, the head covered with hoary locks, cultivating in their practice a pure morality, leading the simple life of the golden ages, when knowledge was directed to objects of real utility, to the moral and physical wants of men, and when human depravity had not yet perverted their gratifications, by, at the same time, vitiating the faculties of the mind.

In studying the history of ancient astronomy, I perceived that the times preceding Hypparchus and Ptolomy, presented us with great but isolated truths, which towered above the general ignorance, like trees left standing on the site of a forest that had been cut down. We there recognize the hand of time, and his levelling scythe: in his progress, he strikes without choice, and spares from indifference. It has been my business to collect the little that has escaped him. I observed, that those remains belonged to a mass of knowledge that had been destroyed, and scattered in fragments: but this mass, when gathered and recomposed, suggests a very high idea of a primitive state of the sciences. I have given proofs of this in my History of Ancient Astronomy: I have greatly added to them in my History of Modern Astronomy, which I am just about to publish. I easily saw that

those

those sciences were not the productions of the nations which actually exist; nor of any known people of Asia; and that, in spite of the antiquity of the Indians, it behoved us to refer those excellent inventions to an anterior and more industrious race of men *.

But you tell me: *If it had been a nation of foreigners who instructed India, would there not remain at Benares certain traces of that ancient event? And yet Mr. Holwel says not a word on the subject.* You add: *Though it is possible that some ancient people might instruct the Indians, may we not be permitted to doubt of it, especially as we have no notice of that ancient people?* We see, then, what remains to be done, in order to complete the evidence laid before the public and you, Sir: we must give you notice or intelligence of that ancient lost people. I might answer you, upon the authority of a great philosopher—that authority is no other than your own. *It is possible,* you say †, *that, long before the empires of China and India, there may have existed nations, instructed, polished, and powerful, whom torrents of barbarians afterwards replunged into that first state of rudeness and ignorance, which is called a state of pure nature?* But we are no longer concerned in the question of possibilities: added to that philosophical and general idea, you have

* Hist. de l'Astr. Anc. p. 16, et suiv.

† Essai sur l'Histoire Generale, par M. De Voltaire, avant propos, p. 9.

given

given rise to another, of deeper investigation. I shall not say a word more of those conformities which establish the consanguinity of those nations, nor of those allegories so well explained by M. De Gebelin, which exhibit in all the works of antiquity the same spirit and physiognomy. We shall make no farther mention of that identity of usages and institutions; those great discoveries, which ought to keep pace with each other among the same people, or at least of the same fraternity; discoveries whose influence long survive themselves, and which point to an original age, of which twenty succeeding ones are only copies. The influence I mean, has been well conceived by M. De Buffon. The poems of Homer have long supplied the subjects of our tragedies: this choice serves to shew what is the power, after 3000 years, of a great man over the minds of posterity, and how much his imagination may govern and regulate the imagination of succeeding poets*. All along, to the age of Louis XIV. of which you are the last great production, we copied, even in the department of the sciences, from the bright ages of Greece and Rome. Asia, of greater sameness and uniformity, at this day divested of genius and the spirit of invention, preserves its ancient aspect, and still imitates a bright

* Reponse de M. De Buffon au remerciements de M. Le Mareschal de Duras à l'Academie Françoise.

age

age sunk in oblivion, the memory of which I wish to revive.

I propose, upon the present occasion, to offer you nothing but proofs of a historical kind. We are about to make the tour of Asia, and, indeed, of the whole bounds of the ancient world. I am hopeful, Sir, you will not appear over nice as to the nature of those proofs. I can shew you nothing but through a veil. It is not in my power to remove out of the way an accumulated mass of time. The annals of this people are no longer extant: the ancient titled deeds are lost. This is a misfortune common to them, with other noble and ancient families. The testimony of historians has been effaced; the thread of tradition has been broken in naked desarts, which war has created, and in the ages of ignorance and barbarity, which are the desarts of time. But there remains an obscure and confused idea; some facts engraven in the memory; the duration of which points to something of truth and importance. A long and durable remembrance, the remembrance of man, is still something. I make much account of certain ancient traditions affectionately cherished, and preserved for a succession of generations. It is those historical traditions which we mean to consult: we shall easily discriminate the additions of a falsifying imagination; we will reject whatever may be deemed contrary to probability and the laws of Nature; the

remainder

remainder we will regard as truth; and we will grant it our cordial belief, lest fifty centuries, which have borne it witness, should rise up and appeal against us.

It is surely possible that a foreign nation might have introduced the light of knowledge, though no traces of it now remain, especially among a people who commit nothing to writing. The masters die, and the pupils are ungrateful. Oblivion of favours is a feature to be found in the history of all nations, and of all men. What occurs in ages of ignorance, is exactly similar to what passes in the dark: every thing is transacted there without witnesses; and when the light comes in, those whom it enlightens have not the smallest notion of any thing that happened before it was introduced. But I should do injustice to my own cause, were I to admit that there exist in India no traces of this great event. Its traces are too deeply imprinted, not to be understood. There is preserved a noble monument of foreign teachers, of an alien philosophy, and, indeed, of instruction received in India, without a single vestige of subsequent progress; I mean the Sanscrit; a learned language, which was abandoned by the people who spoke it, to a people who do not so much as understand it. Their learned men spend their lives in studying it in dictionaries, and have but little success, because, on the one hand, the works that

have

have been preserved are but few, and confined to abstract subjects; and, on the other, those same learned men are still but little removed from a state of ignorance. What stronger proof can be offered to a philosopher like you, Sir? A dead language supposes a people who have ceased to exist: this is a fact which, I take for granted, will not be disputed. Thus, without taking into account the monuments of astronomy, without considering the universal spirit of ancient institutions, all of which vindicate the idea of an antecedent people; the Sanscrit is a monument of their actual existence, and a trace perfectly preserved of their passage into India.

But you will ask me, Whence comes it that this people have no longer a place in the memory of man; why should even their name be so entirely forgotten? I might refer you to that old unmerciful personage who devours his own children; to time, whose every step carries destruction along with it. I might desire you to ask him, why he does not throw open his dark abyss, which, like that of the ocean, conceals infinite treasure?

The history of the past, however, is not wholly swallowed up in that unsearchable abyss: we are rich enough in matters of fact, to be under no necessity to shelter ourselves in that uncertainty. After having made you acquainted with monuments of their existence, you still require that I should give

you

you documents of this people: we must, therefore, call in and hear the witnesses: we proceed directly to their examination. Plato is the first: he went to consult the wise men of Egypt: they were the men who instructed the Greeks, through his mouth. "You do not know (say they), who in your country were the best and most beautiful generation of men that ever lived: there escaped of them but a small seed, of whom you are the descendants. Our writings relate in what manner your republic repelled all the efforts of a vast force, which, emerging from the Atlantic sea, invaded and over-ran with violence and injustice the whole of Europe and Asia *."

Here, then, we have an ancient race of men, who were almost totally destroyed; for Plato does not dissemble from the Greeks, that they were only a feeble remnant of that people. But, Sir, we ought to give the closest attention to the modes of expression employed by philosophical writers. In their narrations, in their pictures, each stroke of the pencil, each shade of colouring, carries an idea. When Plato speaks of the most beautiful, and the best generation that ever existed, he means to denote by the most beautiful, a generation enlightened and instructed; when he represents it as the best, he means to say, that they had morals and laws that obtained respect. Were we to consider those expressions in a

* Plato, in the Dialogue of Timæus.

physical

physical sense only, beautiful would signify Nature blooming and regular; best, Nature vigorous and powerful: but at present we are listening to a poetical philosopher; and therefore we ought to understand by beautiful, instruction; and by best, virtue. Plato spake then of an antecedent, learned, civilized people, but destroyed and forgotten; and he was addressing himself to the Athenians, that light, lively, amiable people, so similar, in all respects, to us Frenchmen, whom I take the liberty to entertain, like him, on the subject of the same people.

But this is not all: Plato does not quote one people only. To that concerning whom I have just spoken, to the people who made a valiant resistance, he opposes a nation issuing from the Atlantic sea, who carried war and injustice into Europe and Asia. This is the history of an unknown period: we perceive here the same features with those of modern history; the actions of men strong and weak, constantly similar; an unjust aggression; a lawful resistance; successful in one corner of the world; every where else force and violence triumphant. This irruption of the Atlantis is a very great and interesting event. They could not over-run Europe and Asia, without operating a revolution over the globe. The feet of the conqueror are of iron: he crushes as he advances; and the dust that rises in his passage, covers every thing that he leaves behind;

but

but if he is the author of ruin and destruction, he is also the author of reproduction. Let us deprecate revolution; let us commiserate our fathers, who have seen and suffered under it. Whatever is good, whether in the moral or physical world, descends to us from heaven, but slowly, by little and little, I had almost said, drop by drop; but every thing that is sudden and instantaneous; every thing that comes in the shape of revolution, is fraught with calamity. A deluge, whether of water, of fire, or of men, spreads itself over the earth only to ravage and destroy it. Thus, it was the evils of that revolution which generated the darkness of those ancient times. Conquest, which levels every thing, has placed the boundary of an immense desart between the nations of whom Plato speaks, and the known nations that are recorded in history. Men date from the epoch of new establishments, whilst all the rest has been effaced.

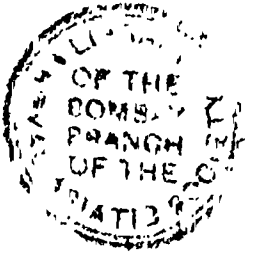
But what preceded this epoch, is extremely interesting. We perceive nations lost and forgotten, like that with which I have made you acquainted. If the sciences prove the necessity of admitting the existence of a people long since destroyed, history supplies us with examples of the same thing. The Atlantic people, as well as the people who opposed their invasion, are lost, in respect of time; we are completely in the dark, as to the ages in which

we ought to place them: they are equally lost, as to place; for the Atlantis itself has long disappeared. We are told that the ocean opened its mouth, and swallowed it up, as if to draw a veil between us and the cradle of that people.

But at the same time that Plato informs us of their existence, he calls our attention to a great invasion; which will account for the loss of the arts, sciences, and every species of knowledge. That event merits all our attention; perhaps it involves those elucidations which you so earnestly desire. Since we are anxious to go back beyond the times of barbarism, and to ascertain the moment of a destruction attested by so many fragments found in the ancient world; we must not overlook that excellent generation which left only a feeble remnant, nor that nation of conquerors who invaded the whole earth. If you will give me leave, I will submit to you the recital of Plato, and compare the facts which he relates with the histories and traditions of different nations. The truth is evinced in the result of concurrent testimonies. I have not the presumption, Sir, to give you lessons either in history or philosophy; but may I not refre h your memory as to all the particulars of which I propose to make you a picture? It would be incomplete, it would not constitute a whole, were any of its parts to be suppressed.

pressed. I am about to plead before you. I mean to quote respectable, but known authorities; and while I eagerly pursue the light, I shall trouble you with nothing but conclusions upon which you shall decide.

I am, with respect, &c.



TWELFTH LETTER TO M. DE VOLTAIRE.

[History of the island Atlantis, not a fiction.]

Paris, 28th Feb. 1778.

You know, Sir, that the history of the island Atlantis is related in two dialogues; one of which is entitled Timæus, and the other Critias. Plato, who is the author of those compositions, begins by giving us the traditional facts. Plato, when still a child, listened to the discourse of his grandfather Critias, at the age of fourscore and ten years. He, in his youth, had been instructed, in like manner, by Solon, the friend of his father, Dropidas; Solon, the legislator of Athens, and one of the seven wise men of Greece. It is impossible, therefore, to suggest a more venerable source of information; a tradition more consistent, or more worthy of our belief. It is in this manner the philosopher has transmitted to us the instruction he received from the priests of Egypt.

One of those priests, formed by the wisdom of the ancients, instructed by memorials, or by the learned pillars intrusted to their care, related to Solon how

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the Athenians, in old times, resisted a mighty force emerged from the Atlantic sea, and distinguished themselves by great atchievements, which a long course of time had buried in oblivion. You are as little inclined as myself, Sir, to believe in those ancient exploits of the Athenians. In the times of Homer and the sack of Ilium, they were still but little better than barbarians: the heroic ages that preceded, were nothing but ages of rudeness and pillage. It is beyond all probability, that in times more remote, the Athenians, still less civilized, less united, and consequently less powerful, should have been capable of such mighty efforts. Besides, this great and glorious defence would have entailed a more lasting remembrance. We must suppose, that Plato resorted here to some flattering tradition, which derived the origin of the Athenians from a certain celebrated people, as Virgil makes the Romans descend from Æneas and Troy, and as some among us attempt to find us an Asiatic origin in the same city, illustrious in spite of its fall, by a long and gallant defence against the powers of Greece. Plato wished to conciliate the attention of his countrymen, whom he knew to be vain, and covetous of glory. He wanted, above all, to soothe and flatter their minds, in order to qualify a harsh truth. "Oh! Solon, Solon (said the wise Egyptian), you same Greeks are always children: be your age what it may, none of you ever attain to

the wisdom and experience of your years. You are all novices in the knowledge of antiquity; you are ignorant of what passed, whether here, or among yourselves, in days of old. The history of eight thousand years is deposited in our sacred books; but I can ascend to a much higher antiquity, and tell you what our fathers have done for 9000 years; I mean their institutions, their laws, and their most brilliant atchievements."

We shall not stay to consider, Sir, those eight or nine thousand years, which certainly were not solar years. But what it is of importance to observe, in order to understand this passage, is the effect produced by the migration of a people. It happened in two ways; either by invasion and conquest, or by the mere change of abode: whether necessity obliged them to send off colonies, or whether the nation at large changed for a more desirable residence. Irruption and conquest were a devouring fire. The people who came to establish themselves over a hundred ruined nations, men constantly armed with the sword, brought neither books nor records along with them: they had but little solicitude for the knowledge of the past: they were more concerned about what they were to be, than about what they had been. It was not till they had begun to enjoy themselves on a richer and more fertile soil, that they conceived the idea of preserving the memory of ages and events.

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Each father related the detail of his life to his children; and of those successive recitals was formed the life of the whole nation, or the history of its duration; but when a nation, as a body, or, partially, in colonies, changed their habitation, they carried all along with them, in their peaceful sojournings, their knowledge, their institutions; the remembrance of the principal events of the past, as well as the memory of their progenitors. The history of their first estate, always preceded the history of the second. At length, traditions became altered from their antiquity; time confounded every thing; and their two histories came to be blended in one. Thus it is, that facts true in themselves, became false, relatively to the places where they were supposed to have happened; an observation which may one day serve to throw much light on the obscurity of history. We should learn to view the heroic ages of Greece; ages for which she arrogates so much glory to herself; not as belonging properly to her, but as constituting the first history of a people who came to settle in the country. Perhaps we shall be able to discover the climes where such a variety of celebrated names actually appeared. We have a conclusive example of this in the history which presently occupies our attention. The Egyptian priest asserts, that he speaks from certain archives preserved at Saïs, in Lower Egypt. Those facts, of from eight to nine thousand years, are deli-

vered as the events of the same country; and yet he begins his narrative by the history of the island Atlantis, which surely was not in Egypt. This association, therefore, of foreign with the domestic events of Egypt, is an unequivocal proof of what I have just stated; while, at the same time, it amounts to a formal confession that the Egyptians derived their origin from that island; the memory of which Plato has preserved, and on which he has bestowed celebrity *.

Plato, or rather the Egyptian priest, continues his narration: "Our archives (he observes) relate in what manner your republic opposed the exertions of a mighty power, which having issued from the Atlantic sea, unjustly over-ran the whole of Europe and Asia. This sea was at that time fordable: on its borders stood an island, opposite to its entrance, which in your language you call the Pillars of Hercules; and this island was of a larger surface than Lybia and Asia together."—The whole, Sir, of this geographical detail might give rise to a number of reflections; but this is not their place. Let us hear Plato, without interrupting him: "In this island of Atlantis there were kings, whose power was very great: it extended over the whole of this island, as well as several others, besides some parts of the mainland. They also reigned, on the one side, over all

* Dialogue of Timæus.

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the countries from Lybia to Egypt; and on the other, namely, on the side of Europe, all the way to Tyrrenia. In the arrogance of their combined forces, they attempted to subjugate your country, ours, as well as all the provinces situated within the Pillars of Hercules, where they commenced their invasion. It was then that your republic displayed its superiority over every thing mortal, by her energy and virtue. She took the command of the other nations of Greece who adhered to her cause: her genius and skill in the art of war, were her best allies in this moment of impending danger. She triumphed over her enemies, and erected trophies of victory, after having vindicated from slavery those whom it menaced, and restored to us all security and freedom. But when, in these later times, there came earthquakes and inundations, the whole of your warriors were swallowed up in the earth, in the space of a day and a night: the island Atlantis disappeared in the sea. It is for this reason that the sea in that quarter is not navigable; nor can any one distinguish the spot, since there has been gradually formed about it an accumulation of mud, occasioned by the island at the bottom*."

Plato resumes the same subject with more detail, in the dialogue entitled Critias. He goes pretty far back into antiquity, since he ascends to the period

* Plato, Dialogue of Timæus.

when

when the gods parcelled out the earth among them, with a view to cultivate and adorn it. The island of Atlantis fell to the lot of Neptune. He there found, upon a small mountain, a single man, called Evenor, with his wife Leusippa. They had been formed of the earth; an origin which the ancients constantly assigned to those of whose descent they were ignorant. Clito was the only daughter of this solitary couple. Neptune became captivated with her charms, and married her. His posterity was numerous: he had five twin-couple of male children. He then divided his territories into ten parts, as the portions of his ten sons. The name of the eldest was Atlas, who afterwards gave his name to the whole island. He had for his inheritance the centre of the island, and the small mountain where his ancestors formerly dwelt; and we may presume, Sir, without a strained conjecture, that the mountain received his name, as well as the island, and was called Atlas.

The posterity of Atlas continued to reign for a long period. The kingdom was regularly transmitted to the eldest son of the family; and the descendants of this race swayed the sceptre for many generations. No prince ever had, or will have, such riches as were possessed by those kings. The island furnished in abundance all the necessaries of life. It abounded in metals, whether solid or fusible *. It produced, above

* All the metals are fusible. We must presume, that by the phrase, a fusible metal, Plato meant quicksilver.

all,

all, the orichalcum; a metal which, even in Plato's time, was known by name only; but which, in the mines of this country, was found in great quantity, and was esteemed, next to gold, the most precious of metals. The forests supplied all sorts of timber for building. The soil maintained numerous tribes of animals, domestic as well as wild: it fed also a vast number of elephants. I abridge, Sir, the advantages of this island, which Plato styles fertile, beautiful, holy, and wonderful; as well as his detailed account of the magnificence of its kings.

We have already had occasion to remark, that things which are long past, and have become ancient, acquire a sort of embellishment in the recollection, while they are magnified by tradition. I shall not trouble you, therefore, with the palaces of the kings, or with the temple of Neptune overlaid with gold, whose vaults were of chased ivory, and the floor of silver and orichalcum. It was adorned with statues of gold; that of the god mounted upon a car, drawn by six winged horses, surrounded by a hundred nereids sitting on dolphins, rose to the ceiling. In the circumjacent space were erected statues of all the kings who had succeeded Atlas and his brothers. The Egyptian priests, careful to preserve ancient usages, shewed in the same manner to Herodotus the statues of three hundred and forty one kings who had reigned over them. Neither shall I

detain

detain you with the bridges, the aqueducts, the baths, the gymnasia, the hyppodroms, which the luxury and industry of that people had constructed for the use, as well as ornament, of life. It will suffice barely to mention those public edifices and structures, in order that you should be impressed with the idea of a civilized and powerful nation. We proceed now to a description of the island itself. Its figure was that of an oblong square; in length from one extremity to the other it was 3000, and in breadth 2000 stadia. The country stretched towards the south, and on the side of the north it was bordered by a chain of mountains. Plato adds, that those mountains, for number, beauty, and grandeur, surpassed all others that were known in his time. They were covered with villages, and rich habitations. It abounded in rivers, in forests, in lakes, in meadows. The surface of the ground had received this happy disposition from the hand of Nature, and had been cultivated by many generations during a long course of time. If we chuse to cast our eye on its government and morals, Plato will inform us, that each of the ten chiefs reigned over his subjects, in his territory and cities, according to the laws. This confederacy of states, considerably similar to the government of the Amphyctions in Greece, was established in consequence of a precise order from Neptune, expressed in a law highly

highly respected, and which was engraven on a pillar of his temple. In this temple, the ten chiefs used to assemble every five or six years alternately, paying the same regard to odd and even numbers. They deliberated upon the affairs of the state, and took cognizance whether any one had violated the law, when he was tried accordingly. But previous to their giving judgment, they pledged their faith mutually to each other in the most solemn manner. Alone, in the presence of the god, they sacrificed a bull, filled a cup with his blood, and, after pouring a little of it upon each of their colcagnes, threw a part of it into the fire, swearing at the same time, that they would judge according to the law inscribed on the pillar, and punish the first person who should be guilty of its violation. They concluded by tasting the blood, each uttering imprecations against himself and his family, if he should deviate from his duty, and they retired after fortifying human weakness by their religious respect for an oath. Accordingly, this people were long attached to the practice of religion and good morals; they obeyed the laws, they entertained not a thought that was not true and elevated, and they were constantly prepared for the vicissitudes of fortune. Despising every thing but virtue, they viewed worldly things as frivolous or indifferent, riches as an incumbrance; a superfluity of sensual delicacies never disturbed their reason.

They

They were wise, and happy enough to know, that sobriety, mutual attachment, virtue, constitute real enjoyment, and add to riches; whereas the ardour and anxiety with which men pursue them, and the high value they set upon them, diminish and blast them in the using: the admirers of perishable things perish like them. Such is the portrait of this people, which Plato thought proper to draw for the Athenians, and which is no doubt overcharged and embellished by the flowers of his eloquence. But after the orator, the moralist comes in at the winding up of the history. Those pure and gentle manners, that incomparable discipline of the Atlantides, were but of short duration. In spite of the safeguards which the wisdom of the ancients had provided, man is born to go astray, to fall; man prevailed. The Atlantes fancied they should be happy in proportion to their accumulation of unlawful gain; they thought they should become great in proportion as they became powerful. The thirst of luxury and power led them to plunder nations, to conquer neighbouring provinces, and they spread themselves abroad upon the earth, from a desire of ease and happiness, which a man is surer to find in the field he cultivates in peace, and by the hearth of his fathers. It was then that Jupiter, the guardian of manners, and avenger of the laws--Jupiter, who surveys all things, saw the depravity of the people, and resolved to

chastise

chastise them. He summoned an assembly of the gods in the celestial mansions, placed in the midst of the universe, and from which the Father of gods and men looks down upon the generations below *. Here ends the text of Plato; the rest is wanting. But we easily perceive, that the philosopher, wishing to make history subservient to the practical interests of men, was about to relate the submersion of the island Atlantis, the destruction of its inhabitants, and to represent it as the effect of a just retribution. The divine justice destroyed the den whence had issued such a multitude of depredators and conquerors for the misfortune of the world. They came forth the scourges of the earth: the scourges of heaven sunk the island which vomited them upon mankind.

It may perhaps be said, that the divine prose of Plato shews he was a poet. Poems are frequently nothing but romance; poetry subsists by fiction. You will object to me, that this people, their manners, their exploits, and their conquests, are the fruits of the moral and brilliant imagination of Plato. This objection has already been made, and it is proper it should receive an answer. The greatest part of poems given as historical, have subjects actually borrowed from history; if the Æneid of Virgil is an invention of flattery, intended to commemorate

* Plato, Dialogue of Critias.

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the origin of the Romans; if certain sceptics have ventured to doubt of the reality of the siege of Troy, and of the truth of the subject of the Iliad; I appeal from them to a poem of the French, to the Henriade, in which the truth of history is retained amidst the embellishments of fiction. Strip off those embellishments, and you will find the naked truth; its dress is the work of the poet. However, you, Sir, who have both so thorough a knowledge of the nature of man, dress him, not for the sake of decency, but that he may appear with a lustre and dignity that shall attract and captivate the attention: it is beauty to which you assign the girdle of Venus. It cannot be doubted that Plato wished to please by his history of the Atlantides: and what is more, he wished to instruct. Still more moralist than poet, he condescends to paint their pure morals, their subsequent corruption, and punishment. But it is plain, that the moral here is only an accessory of the principal object. It is a historian who relates a great catastrophe, and who thence deduces an important lesson. He speaks of the virtue of the Atlantides, but it is just as he concludes; his intention is to shew the greatness of their fall and to give a reason for the displeasure and chastisement of heaven. If the moral had been his main object, he would have painted those pure manners which he wished to hold up for imitation, in greater detail; he would

not

hot have amused himself in describing so minutely the grandeur, the situation of the island, its productions, its riches, the magnificence of temples and palaces. Every thing ought to be in just proportion in a small design; those descriptive passages are by far too long, for so short a narrative. Plato was too great a master in the laws of picturesque arrangement, to place his main subject in a corner of the canvas, and give the chief importance to what was merely an accessory. Not only has Plato not invented the ground-work of the piece, but even the detail is by no means of his contrivance. He has left the seal of truth affixed to it; it would have borne his own if it had been a fiction. Plato tells us, that the ten chiefs assembled alternately every five or six years in the temple of Neptune, having an equal respect for odd and even numbers. If Plato had created this people, or at least a picture of his ideas and manners, in order to exhibit it as an example—Plato, who constructed the world with the five regular solids of geometry—Plato, who in his metaphysical writings, founded upon the number three, divine perfection, as well as the generation of the human species, would not have failed to give to the people of his own fancy, his own ideas; nor would he, by attributing to the Atlantides an indifference for mysterious numbers, have offered an indignity to ancient times, always on the knee to odd

numbers. Writers, like painters, have certain parasite ideas which cling to their manner, and serve to ascertain their productions. You know Bassan: the dog is wanting here; the picture is not by Bassan.

The narrative of Plato, as you observe, Sir, has all the characteristics of truth. It is by no means a fiction intended to amuse and instruct his readers. What proves that Plato related, and did not invent, is, that Homer, who appeared six centuries before him—Homer, well versed in the knowledge of geography and foreign manners, makes mention in the Odyssy, of the Atlantides and their island. The tradition, therefore, was of a more ancient date than the minstrel of Ulysses; he has founded upon it certain fictions of his poem, because it is easy to embellish facts but little known; and besides, that tradition was very remote, both in respect of time and place. The name of Atlas, or of the Atlantic people, was echoed among all the writers of antiquity *: for the invention of those names we are indebted neither to the poet nor the philosopher; and as names imply things, the ancient existence of the people is fully established. It cannot be alledged, that those writers copied from the philosopher, seeing they give us a detail which is not to be found in his dialogues. There is, therefore, a bottom of

* Diodorus Siculus, Strabo, Pliny, Solon, Euripides, &c.

history

history or tradition; and there must have been original sources from which those writers, as well as Plato, derived their information. Diodorus Siculus, and the ancient Sanchoniathon, have preserved the genealogies and exploits of the heroes of Atlantis. I shall cite to you some passages from their relations. I have occasion for the aid of their testimony in concert with that of Plato. You will recollect, Sir, that the question relates to an ancient race of men; an invasion of the earth, a great revolution, which destroyed, or changed the face of every thing. I am obliged to accumulate evidence, in order to place the truth in the strongest light; I must collect the details which give us the circumstances of this memorable event. Plato has described the island Atlantis; Diodorus Siculus will now speak of men who inhabited, of men who issued from that country. The history of the remotest times is not wholly lost; it exists, though in a broken state; though parcelled out among different authors. If we have but courage to seek out, and re-unite those fragments, the history of the past may possibly revive under our hands.

I am, with respect, &c.

THIRTEENTH LETTER TO M. DE VOLTAIRE.

[Confirmation of the existence of the people of Atlantis. Their antiquity and power.]

Paris, 2d March, 1778.

THE Atlantides, says Diodorus Siculus, inhabit a rich maritime country. They differ from all their neighbours, in respect of their piety towards the gods, and their hospitality towards men. They pretend, that it was among them the gods were originally produced; and the most illustrious of all the Grecian poets seems to have been of the same sentiment, when he makes Juno say,

For lo! I haste to those remote abodes,
Where the great parents, sacred source of gods!
Ocean and Tethys, their old empire keep,
On the last limits of the land and deep.

It is in this manner, Sir, that the historian introduces the Atlantides upon the stage. Do you not think it rather singular, that he should mark the place of their abode by simply saying, that it was on the border

border of the sea? How strangely this people are described! By what means are we to find them, but by making the tour of every continent of the globe? In other respects, his narrative perfectly agrees with that of Plato. The country, according to the one and the other, is maritime, and extremely fertile: the inhabitants are highly commendable for their piety. But I proceed to such detail as is not to be found in Plato. The first king of the Atlantides was Uranus. He withdrew wandering men from the pursuits of savage life, and collected them in cities: his dominion extended over almost the whole earth, but especially towards the west and north. He instructed them in the arts, though no doubt of the simplest kind; and what is still more extraordinary, but nevertheless true, if we believe Diodorus, he possessed the knowledge of astronomy. He became famous by his predictions: he had an insight into the events of futurity, that source of the hopes and fears of men, but which is sealed up from their view. They considered him of a nature superior to themselves, and adjudged him divine honours. He read the language of the stars; they assigned his name to the upper region of the universe, where the hand of God had placed them, and himself received the appellation of the Eternal King of all things. Here then we see the first deification of man; here is the original source of Pagan idolatry.

Thus may the virtues of men, the good actions they are disposed to perform, have fatal effects, inasmuch, as a perfect sense of favours, even gratitude itself, begot, on this occasion, an abuse of the pious affections. I have already observed, that this primitive mode of worship had certain derivatives. The Chinese, who adore *Tien*, or the heavens; the Siamese, who adore the *eternal heavens*, under the name of Sommona-kodom, seem to have been instructed by the Atlantides, and to be neither more nor less than the votaries of Uranus placed in the heavens, with the same name.

Uranus, amidst his celestial cares, was not unmindful of things here below. He was eminently prolific; he had forty-five children by different wives: Titea alone brought him eighteen, named after herself, Titans. She left her name to the earth which she had honoured by her virtues. Among the children of Uranus were Hyperion, Atlas, and Saturn. His eldest daughters were Basilea, and Rhea, named also Pandora. Hyperion, when he succeeded his father, married his sister Basilea; their goodness and humanity, the happiness of the people under their government, every thing that tends to give umbrage to the wicked, alienated the Titan brothers of Hyperion. They took the resolution to murder him, with his son Helius: they assassinated the father, and drowned

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the son in the Po. When the news reached the palace, Selene, sister to Helius, threw herself headlong, and put an end to her life. Basilea, with a tenderness incredulous of her loss, after seeking the body at least of her son along the course of the river, succumbed under her sorrows, and fell asleep. Helius appeared to her in a dream: he informed her, that the sacred fire preserved in the heavens, should thenceforth bear his name, and be called Helius, or the Sun; that the planet of the night, hitherto named Mene, should be called, like his sister, Selene, or the Moon. The disconsolate mother had the consolation to see her son rise after Aurora every day, and to mourn him with her daughter during the night. I need not remark, that this recital, historical or fabulous, contains the history or fable received in Egypt, of Osiris, who perished by the artifice of Typhon, as well as of Isis seeking the remains of her husband and of her son Horus, on the banks of the Nile. This is no equivocal proof of the consanguinity of the two people, as well as of the descent of the Egyptians, for the Atlantides are involved in much more obscurity: the history of the Egyptians is well known. Whatever is transmitted to us in detail is recent: obscurity is the seal of antiquity, which is always covered with a veil.

Upon the death of Hyperion, the sons of Uranus divided the kingdom. The two of greatest renown,

were Atlas and Saturn. The maritime places falling by lot to Atlas, this prince gave his name to his subjects, and to the highest mountains of his country. He had one son of distinguished virtue, and deeply regretted, Hesperus, who, according to the fable, was carried away by the winds of that mountain. He was seen no more; but his people, in their sorrow, placed him in the most brilliant of the planets: the son of Atlas, is Venus, or the evening star. His daughters, named Maia, Electra, Taygeta, Asterope, Merope, Alcyone, and Celæno, are all seven known under the name of the Atlantides: they were distinguished favourites of the gods. Maia, the eldest, had by Jupiter a son, named Mercury, who was the inventor of various arts. The other Atlantides had also sons of celebrity. Some distinguished themselves as the founders of nations, others as the builders of cities. It is for this reason, that not only certain barbarous nations, but even Greek states, derive the lineage of their ancient heroes from the Atlantides. These princesses, or nymphs*, as they were then called, had, after their death, a place in the heavens, where they remain, under the name of the seven Pleiades. Atlas had no place assigned him in the celestial vault, which, on the contrary, rests upon his

* Nymph was the name given to all women, without distinction, in the country of the Atlantides.—Diodorus, Traduc. de Terasson, tom. i. p. 455.

shoulders:

shoulders: they gave his name to the common axis of heaven and earth, the pivot on which the world revolves. The chief of the nation should have occupied the centre, that fixed point, upon which the motion of the machine seems to depend. When men came to observe an immoveable star at the Pole, amidst a multitude of other stars arranged round it, so as to embrace it in their circular progress; they represented it under the emblem of a shepherd who tends his flock; under the similitude of a father, a king, who watches over his children or subjects. This, then, was the place of Atlas, whose family, as you see, people the heavens. Was there ever, Sir, a happier idea, and at the same time more natural, or, an idea more consolatory, amidst the losses to which our afflicted nature is exposed! We are thrown between generations that are gone, which we never saw, and generations to come, for whose existence we provide, but which we shall not see. Our ancestors, those objects finally extinct, noticed in our discourse, but always with coldness and indifference, have little hold of our affections, or even of our memory; but the Atlantides wrote their names in the heavens: they hold them up to the view, and to the veneration of their posterity. They appear, then, alive, as being in motion: the memory of their life on earth, is attached to their names: collectively they offer themselves in a body, to give instruction and examples;

examples; and a populous family, in a succession of many centuries, are present to the senses, entire, living, and speaking.

Saturn, the son of Uranus, and brother of Atlas, was, as it is said, king of Sicily, Italy, and Africa. But let us remember, Sir, that those events are of a date much more ancient than the peopling of either Sicily or Italy. Men, in their peregrinations from place to place on the globe, carried about with them their ideas, the fables of their childhood, and the history of their ancestry; and this whole retinue came to be naturalized, as well as themselves, in the place where they took up a fixed residence. What I believe has more truth, just because it is vague, like the obscurity of the times, is, that Saturn established his empire in the west. He caused fortresses to be erected upon the mountains, in order to strengthen and consolidate his authority; whence it happened, that in the time of Diodorus, all the high grounds were styled Saturnian. Saturn, by whom we personify time, was, say they, wicked and avaricious. I am not sure, that we ourselves have not pictured him in this likeness, through the medium of those allegories in which we have involved his existence. Time is old, and that is a good reason why he should be avaricious: time destroys all things; it consumes what itself produces. it devours our youth, our life; it is is quite sufficient to entitle him to the character

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of wicked. The circumstance which suggests this doubt to my mind is this, that he married his sister Rhea, who had the happiness to see, under his reign, the birth of Astrea, or Justice. Women are but seldom trusted with the reins of government: their administration is still more rare in rude times, before the charms of society, polished by female influence, have any existence. Why should justice take her birth under the reign of a wicked king? Why assign to those ages of ignorance, but of happiness, *the auspicious times of Saturn and Rhea*; that golden age, which never returns, and which we all regret? Should we ever find the country of the Atlantides, we shall then know the land where our ancestors were so happy: or, at least, if, as we have shewn, the remembrance of a happiness we have lost, is nothing more than the remembrance of youth; if, as we may believe, man is always like himself, with an equal sum of happiness, though derived from different objects, in different periods of life—we shall know what climes witnessed the youth of the human species. The voice of history continuing to calumniate Saturn, gives him a son better than himself. This was the great Jupiter: he was of a disposition gentle and affable: his people loved him, and gave him the name of Father Jupater. His father resigned the kingdom in his favour; or rather, perhaps, the people, who hated Saturn, and obliged him to abdicate the sovereignty.

vereignty. But regret is at the foot of the throne: Saturn, assisted by the Titans, hoped to dispossess his son. Jupiter overcame him in a pitched battle, and remained master of the universe. He then cared for nothing but to make his subjects happy, and to punish wickedness and impiety. We may easily suppose that his cares, his many virtues, and above all, his splendid successes, would unavoidably conduct him to heaven. The honours of an apotheosis were accordingly reserved for him: they assigned him his place in the planet Jupiter, which still bears his name; and they conferred on him the appellation of *Zeus*, which signifies living. Never had an apotheosis so wide an extent, or a period of so long duration. A king, during his life, and after his decease, god of the whole earth! Placed at the origin of the human race, all memory of things began with him: he travelled with nations: in all places he had altars and worship: he filled the earth, and the whole succession of ages, with his name. But honours, like all other human things, are not eternal: of so many dominions, all that remains to him at this day is his planet.

In another passage, Diodorus connects the history of the Atlantides with the ancient history of Egypt, by assigning the reign of the first race of gods to that beautiful country which was so early inhabited *. The first were, Helius, or the Sun, Saturn, Rhea, Ju-

* Diodorus Siculus, tom. i, lib. i. p. 28.

piter,

piter, Juno, Mercury; afterwards Osiris and Isis, the children of Saturn or of Jupiter, to whom the Egyptians applied the whole history of Hyperion and his wife Basilea. It is among the Atlantes, then, that we discover the elements of Grecian theology. It was there, as the Greeks themselves inform us, that the gods first existed; and there, also, is the source of the Egyptian Mythology. In all parts of the earth where we meet the names of these primitive gods, we recognize the blood of Atlas, and the titles of his family. Thus it is that the worship of deified men, of men translated to the stars, then of the stars themselves, then of idols, which represented either men or stars, to the people, always attached to present gods and sensible images—took its rise among an ancient people lost and forgotten. The Atlantides branched off into various other nations; a tree which, originating in the adolescency of the world, at length covered it with its boughs. Diodorus tells us, that the sons of Atlas were the chiefs of many races of men; and that the Greeks, as well as the people whom they termed barbarians, accounted it their honour to be reckoned among their descendants. What we observe of the Greeks, may be applied with equal justice to the Egyptians, who tacitly acknowledge it in the descent and filiation of their gods. The people of Atlantis, then, must be allowed to have preceded them. This is the parent stock, from which all

others

others are descended; the stock, in respect of life and existence, as well as in respect of institutions, fables, and histories. It is remarkable, how every thing begins with it. The arts, and the use of writing, are invented by Mercury; cities are built, astronomy begun, the art of divination is introduced under Uranus; we have justice, or in other words, the promulgation of laws under the children of Saturn and Rhea; in fine, the worship of idolatry, established by Jupiter, a worship originating in sentiments of gratitude and beneficence, infecting one corner of the earth only to spread itself over the whole globe, in its primitive form, and with the same names, and a detail of history, faithfully preserved. All the gods, whose origin is of a posterior date, are of this primary lineage; they are related to it either by their known descent, or by a family likeness; these are infallible marks of antiquity. The human mind has had its period of chaos, as well as the material world. We observe here, that chaos evolves into order at the voice of the Supreme Disposer; the light separate itself from the darkness; man rolling in the mire which covers his origin. The light is introduced with the arts invented by Mercury, with the knowledge of astronomy taught by Uranus; but ignorance, still unsubdued, adulterates those beneficent arts, by compounding them with the fatal error of predictions.

Justice

Justice appears, and laws are enacted in the halcyon days of the golden age; but a ferocious race declare their enmity against them, and attempt to break down those recent and salutary fences; Jupiter is forced to make war upon the Titans, those lofty sons of the earth, or, in other words, the giants; men, whose origin is so ancient, that the earth alone could give them birth. The giants, taken literally, may have been the fruit of certain vigorous energies of Nature, or, viewed in a figurative sense, they may have been men robust, powerful, and without any species of restraint; and by their being placed amidst pure and simple manners, which perhaps have an affinity with a sort of ignorance, that, when once lost, is not to be met with again, we clearly perceive the infancy of the world, the first rudiments of society, when in the absence of law, and all human controul, men were exactly what Nature formed them; the wicked without shame, without fear, dispersing for the purpose of pillage, or uniting for greater strength; the good, quiet and simple, exposed at first to their violence and tyranny, afterwards associating but for their own defence only. This is a pleasing picture: I rejoice to see that the good prevailed; society and laws are of their operation: the malevolent, though of greater activity, though assisted by force and cunning, were yet overmatched by the superior

numbers

numbers of the good, by the general mass of the human race.

Why should we, Sir, not acknowledge the antiquity of the people of Atlantis, since even the Egyptians, by beginning their history with that of the Atlantides, evidently acknowledge it; since the Greeks, jealous and proud as they were, and prone to dress themselves in every thing foreign, in one of those moments when the truth, in a state of compression, recovers, like a spring, its legitimate power, confess, by the mouth of Diodorus Siculus, that the gods whom they worshipped, gods of greater antiquity than themselves, were the gods and heroes of the Atlantides. Diodorus was not the inventor of those things, so contrary to Grecian vanity; a hundred other writers would have risen to refute him. It is clear, then, there existed a tradition from which he obtained them. But who would have had the boldness to forge this tradition at a period when Egypt was revered, when Greece was in her glory, and yielded to none but to her mother Egypt? The people of Atlantis, whose existence is no longer a problem, had disappeared. The dead are soon forgotten: we look for nothing from them; it is but seldom we undertake their defence: with still less reason was it to be expected, that some writer of romance should wish to give them celebrity by his historical fictions; thus nothing remains

to

to them but the naked truth in all its dryness; we are under the necessity of admitting, then, that the voices which are heard in their favour, are those of justice. If there are historians who tell us, this theogony belongs to the Egyptians, or to the Greeks, this mode of worship took its rise in such a city: one of them is prepared to speak on the part of the Atlantides, and will say, this theogony is theirs; that mode of worship, those gods, those heroes, belong to them: this last is alone the organ of truth; the former are flatterers, men either deceived, or wishing to deceive.

Sanchoniathon, our third witness, is a fresh respondent for this high antiquity. You know, Sir, that after Moses, he is the most ancient of our historians; he certainly lived previous to the siege of Troy; and if, as has been thought, he appeared in the time of Semiramis, he must have preceded the Christian Æra twenty, or twenty-two hundred years. He was a Phœnician, a learned man, and of much experience: curious to obtain information of past events, he sought and consulted the books of Thot, the father of history, and the first who left records behind him. These records were deposited and preserved in the temples; it was difficult to see them, but they contained a variety of paternal traditions. Such was the authority upon which Sanchoniathon wrote his history of Phœnicia. He begins it with

the world itself, and gives us some account of the first races of men. Among the characters whom he cites as the fathers of the whole species, he mentions Taaut, or Mercury, Helius, Uranus, Chronos, or Saturn, Atlas, his sons, Persephone, or Proserpine, Athena, or Minerva, Jupiter, Hercules, &c. I do not affect to say, Sir, that the narratives of Diodorus and Sanchoniathon are precisely the same; they actually differ in some particulars; but this is no more than we ought to expect in a history related by different authors. Did you ever hear the same piece of public news reported in the same manner? Images and impressions are conveyed to the brain by channels that are peculiar to ourselves, I mean our bodily organs: in these they are necessarily and differently modified in different individuals. All men do not see and apprehend alike; the imagination, unequally distributed, has there also a considerable influence: what a variety of causes of diversity even in things present! How great then must be the change in the past, which is transmitted to us through so many heads and different organs! But, at the same time, concurrent testimonies, arising out of this confusion, have very great weight; and the truth of history is evinced and demonstrated by a similarity of names, and the same detail of circumstances. We find in Sanchoniathon almost all the names of the gods and chiefs of the Atlantes:

Uranus

Uranus giving his name to the heavens, marrying his sister, who was afterwards the earth; one of the sons of Uranus killed by the other; Mercury inventing letters and the use of writing. It is true, that our author does not name the Atlantides, but neither was it his business to do it; perhaps it was not in his power. He wrote from Phœnician documents; and the Phœnicians had taken care to have every thing transported into their own country. According to them, the first men dwelt in the vicinity of Tyr and Byblos; the scene of all past events was laid in the country of Phœnicia; just as the Egyptians confined it to Egypt, along the banks of the Nile, and about Memphis, which was not built till long after; and as the Greeks too, of much less antiquity, have attributed the birth, or at least the lives of those heroes, to their little corner of the world. Thus it is that Sanchoniathon bears his testimony to the authenticity of the history of the Atlantides; but, at the same time, his narrative carries in it marks of a very high antiquity.

The history of Phœnicia commences by a system of cosmogony, or the origin of the world. Sanchoniathon describes an evolution or developement of eternal matter. *In the beginning*, says he, *there was nothing but the spirit and breath of a dark air, a chaos full of confusion and devoid of light.* This spirit becoming enamoured of chaos, produced love, then

the slime whence sprung beings of every order. Not that there did not exist animals even then; they were called contemplators of the heavens. They were produced similar to the world, and after the manner in which a hatched egg discloses its young. The animals here mentioned were undoubtedly no other than the heavenly bodies endowed with intelligence; for on a sudden, matter became luminous, when the sun and all the stars shone out. The air emitted the splendour of fire, the earth and sea were highly inflamed; whence proceeded winds, clouds, and rain. The mixture and collision of all those materials produced lightning and thunder. At this noise animals, male and female, awoke as from a profound sleep, and being frightened by the terrible uproar, began to move in the waters, and to walk upon the dry land. From night and wind sprung the first mortal man and woman, the authors of the human race. The whole of this philosophy consists in a sort of pure materialism, but still we may suppose, that if night and wind were not proper names, the Phœnicians must have meant to denote by night, the obscurity of creation; and by wind, the eternal breath which animates matter. Such, then, are the contents of those sacred books of Tyr and Byblos.

It is a strange madness in men, to affect to relate in what manner was formed the world we inhabit;

the world, which existed long before we had an existence ourselves. Man was not present when God arranged and consummated his work; he did not behold that darkness which only means the limits of his own knowledge; he did not see that convulsion of the elements mixed and agitated the one by the other; nor did he hear that whizzing of the air, the storms of Nature in the act of yielding obedience to the sovereign command. He knows not the moment when the stars began to roll, nor that when the light first descended to beautify the world; his knowledge can scarcely be said to begin with his life: should he have known whether he came into the world whole and entire as he is; should he have known when, where, and how he began to exist, if the only witness of so many wonders had not revealed it to him? It is extravagant in us to relate what we do not know, and to explain what we do not comprehend. But this is a madness highly characteristic of antiquity, when it is identified with history, and serves as its basis. The most audacious presumption has certain bounds. When a man is inclined to boast, he goes beyond the truth, but he respects probability. The Romans begin in no such way the history of a city destined to be the mistress of the world; the Greeks, false and impudent as they were, have not dared to refer their origin to the beginning of things, and to

seat themselves upon the cradle of the world. This madness, however, could only occur in nations of real antiquity, and who were in a close degree of consanguinity to the first race of men. To such nations as forgot and became strangers to God, the commencement of the world, and the known commencement of the human race, were one and the same thing. All beyond that was the darkness of an unfathomable abyss. The Phœnicians attempted to imagine, and present the world with a picture of that abyss; but upon its last verge, upon the summit of time and existence, they took care to place their own ancestors, whom they regarded as the first of the species; and these ancestors are those also of the Atlantides. Thus it is, that the Phœnicians, so proud and jealous of their antiquity, bear witness, that they were the descendants of the Atlantides, and that they verged upon the origin of things, or, at least, upon that presumed origin, which time, even at this day, has not wholly covered with its veil.

I feel it somewhat irksome to dispossess the Phœnicians, the Egyptians, and the Greeks, who, from the habit of education, and a sort of usurped reputation, have been esteemed the most ancient, as well as the most productive of all the nations of the earth. But, Sir, the human race has now existed for many ages; it is old enough to have attained the use of reason, and to reconsider the ideas of its childhood:

as we grow in stature, our ideas ought to ripen with us into puberty; we ought to exercise our judgment and decide like men. I once had a preceptor; I thought him full of science and genius; but when my ideas became more enlarged, I saw that he had learned himself every thing that he had taught me. The Greeks, the Phœnicians, the Egyptians, were our preceptors; it is true, but, believe me, they too learned like ourselves. Here then we have three great nations who are of the race of Atlas. It might well be said, that his descendants were the chiefs of many nations. I am truly sorry that we have not yet been able to find the island, or at least the situation of that celebrated spot, whence arose so many founders. There was the source of language, of writing, of art, of science; branches of knowledge, which, if not perfected, at least began there, as well as mythology, and a vast system of idolatrous worship.

I see you are about to interrupt me; your will tell me, Sir, that those histories of Atlas, of Hercules, of Saturn, have not one grain of reality. In times past, men could perceive in them nothing but religious fable: M. De Gebelin, more ingenious, and better informed, can consider them only as allegorical fictions. Hercules is the sun; Saturn is husbandry: they are merely ancient precepts or instructions, laid up in the memory of the people, under

the form of a metaphor or allegory. I should be tempted to believe, however, that this allegory has an historical basis; but I readily admit the whole merit of the ingenuity displayed in those researches; I am willing that every one of their conclusions should be true: the conclusions which I have just drawn will remain unshaken. The existence of a people who preceded and gave birth to the Phœnicians, the Egyptians, and the Greeks, is not the less established in evidence. These precepts, however, must have suffered a strange metamorphosis when they were converted into histories: the people, even the historians of antiquity, were sadly deceived by them. It cannot be denied, that they regarded those allegoric personages as real characters; they specify the place where Saturn reigned, and where Hercules was seen to pass. The people who invented those allegories were not the authors of these mistakes. We shall never be in danger of mistaking our court calendar for a living being; nor shall we ever convert husbandry into an old man, who propagates his race only to devour it. It was when languages, when nations changed and fluctuated on the earth, that ignorance begot these errors, by receiving instruction which it could not digest; it is easy to conceive what must happen when a rude people take the figurative language of learned men in a literal sense. Thus I perceive a people who framed

framed and digested those instructions for their own use, and, at the same time, a people who received them only to be misled and deceived by them. I see, on the one hand, an acquaintance with the objects of Nature, a warm and lively imagination, which bestows a living form on its histories and precepts; on the other, I see ignorant mortals, who understand neither language, the phenomena of Nature, nor the embellishments of fancy; stupid enough at their first outset to see in those precepts nothing but a historical detail; impudent enough, regardless enough of truth, afterwards to take them to themselves, and to make them serve as decorations of their national origin. We may act as we please; we everywhere discover the vestiges of ignorance which succeed to knowledge. Institutions of science are preserved, but misunderstood. Physical systems give rise to dogmas of religion: the phenomena of particular climates produce fables: allegories degenerate into histories. We are not unacquainted with the authors of these mistakes: they are not the Phœnicians, the Egyptians, the Greeks, alone; they are also the people among whom they have their common ancestry. All those three are in the same error, because it descends from the same source. But the people who altered the nature of things in so many instances, the people who gave

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birth to so many allegorical and disguised truths, are of a higher antiquity than those nations.

But were we even to suppose that the term Atlas, with all its derivatives, were allegorical, still this people, as I have described them, are what I call the Atlantides; a people who issued from the island of Plato. It will be of service to study their character, to trace their steps, and to investigate their origin: they will conduct us, perhaps, to the real authors of those allegories. But were we to judge of them merely by the facts we have actually before us, this people would seem highly interesting, by reason of the lasting influence they have had on the affairs of the world. How many the generations who have imbibed their genius, who have worshipped their gods! The numberless institutions and memorials they have left behind them, force us to conclude, that their reign was not of a moment, but that they had time to acquire a very solid consistency. We can recognize in them that populous, rich, and powerful people whom Plato describes: tribes isolated, and but scanty in numbers, families in a state of dispersion, before they unite in one compact body, want that weight and importance which could confer on their memory and institutions either the same extent of influence or duration. But their barely existing in a political capacity is not enough: it is necessary, that,

as a national body, their life should have been long, as well as their constitution robust. Many are the states, as well as individuals, who die without performing any thing of consequence in the world, without laying up the materials of a durable memory: usefulness alone can entitle us to be remembered: oblivion is the lot of idleness and inactivity. I begin to be of opinion, that the memory of the people in question cannot be entirely vanished from the earth. I entertain a hope that it may not be impossible to discover the situation of their island, though buried in the waters. One should suppose, founders like them must certainly have left some vestiges behind them; I mean traces of those institutions which they communicated and bequeathed to mankind. We shall be no longer obliged to a small number of testimonies, such as those of Plato, Diodorus, and Sanchoniathon; those institutions themselves constitute a multitude of witnesses. We shall set out, Sir, when you please, in quest of the island Atlantis.

We are about to wander over the globe, like Cybele in search of Proserpine. We have only to consult the moderns, as to the route we ought to pursue. I am not the first who have engaged in the inquiry: several others have lost their way before me. If I, too, should fail, they will at least caution

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me against different ways of going wrong; but I have no doubt of my success: you are in my thoughts, and your genius will take the lead before me.

I am, with respect, &c.

FOUR-

FOURTEENTH LETTER TO M. DE VOLTAIRE.

[First inquiry concerning a lost people.]

Paris, 18th March, 1778.

WHEN it became an object with men of letters to make inquiry for the people of Atlantis, it was natural, Sir, to consult and follow Plato; but all those who took him for their guide were not philosophers. Without pretending to that honour, I harken to Plato; I speak to you: I shall endeavour to render myself worthy of the one and the other.

Plato says that this people inhabited an island near the continent, and opposite to the mouth or entrance where stand the Pillars of Hercules. It was not in his power to express himself better, if it had been his intention to mislead us; or rather, modern institutions, and other circumstances, have rendered his description equivocal and deceptious. It was asked, where on earth are the Pillars of Hercules?—and after tracing the limits of his useful and glorious career, they found them at the Straits of Gibraltar, near Cadiz. There stand two celebrated mountains of antiquity,

antiquity, Calpe, and Abila: they made in ancient times only one. Hercules tore them asunder with his hands, to open for the waters of the Mediterranean a passage into the ocean. Besides those pillars of Nature, there were seen in the Temple of Hercules, at Cadiz, two pillars sacred to this demi-god. The Straits of Gibraltar seemed to represent the entrance mentioned by Plato. These monuments having directed the inquiries of the moderns, they sought for the island of Atlantis without the Straits, in the main ocean. They gave the name Atlantis to that immense sea which has buried, or which, in old times, bathed, that island. Atlantis was by no means so inconsiderable, as that it should not easily be found, did it still exist. Plato tells us, that it was 3000 stadia in length, and 2000 in breadth; that is to say, it was in extent about 150 leagues by 100, and almost equal to that of France; but at the same time he adds, that this island had been swallowed up in the sea; and consequently nothing remained but the hope of discovering its fragments. Men thought they had made this discovery, and pointed us to the Canary isles, which are opposite to the continent of Africa, at a short distance from the Straits of Gibraltar, and which, they pretend, shew only the ridges of a land whose plains are now covered by the sea. This idea was ingenious; but, Sir, what are islands of any sort, but elevations rising from the

bottom of the sea? They are the mountains of the great deep. The same observation is equally applicable to all the small Archipelagoes scattered over the globe. This notion, then, was only countenanced by the Pillars of Hercules placed at the Straits, and which ought to shew at a distance the ancient position of the island Atlantis. One would have been better pleased, however, if, instead of fragments, they had found the island itself. Columbus supplied them with this opportunity, when he made the discovery of America.

That vast continent, situated opposite to those of Europe and Africa, at some distance, it is true; that country of great fertility, and abounding in metals, called to mind the description of the philosopher: there they found all the riches and magnificence of his island; and the new world was the Atlantis of Plato. I am not very certain whether they did not find there also the ophir of Solomon; since it was thither that this wise king sent for gold; inexhaustible sources of which have been discovered in America. Such, Sir, were the ideas of men of letters, of a learned, not of a philosophical age. We now proceed to examine their hypothesis by their own lights.

We must pass over to America; not to view it as it is: the natives of Europe have suffered nothing to remain as they found it: their industry has changed

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and adorned this new country, as their cruelty depopulated it at a former period. You, Sir, who, with all your philosophy, have been a poet; your fertile and correct imagination can represent to itself many things, either such as they are, or such as they have been. We are to restore to the new world its old face; we are to survey it as in the days of Columbus.

It was a rich, but uncultivated soil; a new and virgin earth. An uncultivated soil is in condition to maintain but few inhabitants, as a virgin earth can have fallen but lately into the hands of man. Nature had clad this country in a rough coat of forests and parasitical plants, which filling the intervals between the trees, covered the surface with one almost impenetrable mass. The plains were over-run with plants, and a sort of tall grass, which presented the appearance of brush-wood; and the whole was peopled by hideous insects and reptiles, fattened and swollen with the juices of the earth, which had but them to maintain. These are not the ordinary productions of her fertility. When man applies his labour and industry for her cultivation and improvement, animals of every other description withdraw, or perish. The consumer man shares nothing but against his will: in his hand, Nature produces what is useful only: the earth dismisses her parasite plants; in place of those appearances of luxuriance, culture

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establishes those of order and economy; order originates in the wants of life; economy announces a large population. At the same time, such a population existed in no part of the American continent. In that country there were found only two civilized and pretty numerous states, the Mexicans and the Peruvians, who dwelt along the shores of the eastern and Pacific Ocean. But those nations were by far too young, of too great recency, to have conceived the desire of quitting their native soil; and they were not sufficiently populous to make them think of the expedient of colonies. Besides, the rest of the continent, almost in a desart state, afforded them ample scope for extending their boundaries. It was neither, then, from Mexico nor Peru, that the Atlantides commenced their invasion; nor, indeed, from any other part of the American continent, peopled as it was, from place to place, with straggling hordes, or families associated under the name of a nation, whose whole industry was confined to the chace, to fishing, and to provide for the first necessities of life.

What a variety of beautiful climates present themselves in America! Men never think of relinquishing a fertile soil, to let it fall back into the state of a desart, especially when they must embark in ships, and expose themselves to a thousand dangers. But does it appear, that at the time of Columbus and Cortez, the Americans actually possessed ships? I

have no where read of the flourishing state of the Mexican or Peruvian navy. Upon the other coasts we find nothing but fishing canoes, which are scarce in condition to pass from one island to another: it is not in such bottoms that a man would willingly risk a voyage from America to Europe. In those canoes we perceive the first step towards a navy; but there is a wide interval between it in those rude elements, and in its most perfected state.

Will you allow me to tell you, Sir, that from those pitiful fishing-boats, and their little excursions in view of land, I cannot even form an idea of the origin of distant navigations? I observe, that on land a man removes farther and farther from home, because fear subsides as hope increases; nor do his dangers augment in proportion to the length of the journey. A man has confidence in the solidity of the earth that bears him; but his situation is far from being the same at sea. There are no two things so unlike to each other as the sea in a calm, and the sea in a storm: her bosom contains a deep and fearful abyss; and it is well known that she throws it open all at once. A man may contemplate from the shore the spectacle of a storm: he will see the surface rise into mountains, or sink into precipices. Is it reasonable to imagine, that man, without the most imperious motive, would trust his life to a frail flimsy boat, and expose himself to become the sport of this

terrible

terrible element? Though a spectator of the danger and caprice of the ocean, he had never had experience of a storm; he kept always within view of land; and the oar brought him on shore at the first sign of inconstancy in the weather. Besides, Sir, why should he put out far from the coast, where were deposited his goods and his hopes? In return for what advantages, for what promises or prospects, should he choose to sacrifice his possessions and his life? We neither give nor perform any thing for nothing. Who was to tell a man, that by traversing this element, he should find on the other side an indemnification for all the damage he might sustain? Man, though naturally timid, has moments of rashness: he is imprudent, and capable of making a great sacrifice to slender hopes; but still he must have something to hope for. Greenland is a harsh and hideous country; its inhabitants swim like fishes. A Greenlander is overset in his canoe; he rights it, takes his place as before, and continues his fishing. Nevertheless, we do not find that he hazards the perils of a long voyage, to escape from a country which affords him nothing. The reason is obvious. birth, and the habits of life, have concentrated there all his hopes, with every idea of happiness; and yet we are told. that men inhabiting a beautiful country, in an extensive continent, which presented a vast field for the gratification of curiosity and the desire

of changing their abode, chose to subject themselves to all the dangers of terrible and unknown seas. I find in the nature of man, but one motive which could possibly give occasion to such an act of temerity. We all love liberty; whatever impedes or restrains us, appears insupportable. I can conceive, that man might brave the terrors of the sea, when it presented itself an obstacle in his way; but this can only happen when it besieges him on all sides, and when, in the midst of its roaring, it seems to say to the insular inhabitant, I dash my waves against the sides of thy coast, to render thee its slave. Islanders are the men who ought first to have attempted navigation, properly so called. This species of enterprize could only enter the mind of a man shut up a prisoner in an island, where his curiosity is soon gratified, and his desires are too much circumscribed. You know, Sir, what despair will accomplish, in order to obtain freedom from a jail. Add to the effect of a tedious and wearisome confinement, an overgrown population, the number of inhabitants exceeding the means of their subsistence; and you will have still farther the coercive stimulus of want; which, comparing one death with another, induces a man to embrace danger, recommended by hope. Thus, it was islanders who first taught the inhabitants of the main-land that it was possible to brave and traverse the sea in quest of new habitations. But these islanders must have had

had industry, the arts necessary for the construction of shipping, and a motive of necessity that dictated the use of them. The natives of the continent could receive no benefit from this lesson and example, till they came to be in possession of the mechanic arts, till they were excited by the pursuits of industry, and till luxury, giving rise to factitious, but no less importunate than real wants, supplied a motive for such daring enterprizes. Then it was that cupidity perfected what had been begun by despair.

If fleets, in ancient times, conducted conquerors into Europe and Asia, those conquerors were not from America; the population of those vast regions was by far too inconsiderable. The Americans were strangers to the arts of industry; nor was there a single instance of their ships having arrived upon our coasts. They were not a little astonished at the sight of ours, when we made them a visit, which they would willingly have dispensed with. It was we Europeans who shewed them

> L'appareil inoui pour ces mortels nouveaux,
> De nos chateaux a'iles qui voloient sur les eaux *.

We must, therefore, desist from every attempt to find the Atlantis in America, and with the more reason, that Plato describes it as being pretty near the continent. This circumstance, which excludes the

* Vaux d'Alzire.

new world, leads us back to the Canaries. These islands are at a short distance from the Straits of Gibraltar and the Pillars of Hercules, or the two mountains which narrow the passage. Strictly speaking, canoes, rafts, and the industry of barbarians, might suffice to accomplish a passage to the coast of Africa. I have no desire to suppress any thing that may seem to give countenance to the opinion I am combating, and therefore I shall take notice of a fact which appears to favour the idea of placing the island Atlantis in the Canary isles. Ancient Egypt is full of the memory of the Atlantides, and the names of their chiefs. If this people came from the Canaries, we should expect to find in those isles some usages similar or analogous to those of Egypt. This is precisely what has been observed at Teneriffe: a people named Guanch still inhabit it: they have certain subterraneous vaults, which they employ as sepulchres. Those vaults are entirely shut up, and the entrance to them is a secret, intrusted to a succession of old men, who transmit it one to another. There the dead have been preserved, under the form of mummies, for an unknown course of time*. The Guanch have the secret of embalming them as well as the Egyptians, with this difference, that the latter wrapt up their mummies in bands charged with hieroglyphics, which no doubt contained the history of the

* Hist. Gen. des Voy. in 12mo. tom. vi. p. 252.

dead,

dead, while the Guanch, stripping the bodies naked, sewed them up in skins: they never thought of inscribing their history, as, in all probability, they had not the art of writing. M. Le Chevalier De Borda lately brought home two of those mummies, one male, the other female, both in good preservation, and found in the island Teneriffe: they are deposited in the king's cabinet.

Nobody will deny, that we have here a very remarkable conformity with Egyptian usages; but as it is a single fact, we cannot see that any conclusion ought to be drawn from it. It is in the class of those usages, which we conceive to be universal; inasmuch as they have their source in the human heart. Filial love, a veneration for our ancestors, belong to pure and simple nature, which has an intermediate existence between the savage and the corrupted state of mankind. This usage, then, is competent to all countries where the sentiments of love and humanity have been awakened in the breast by the influence of society; where the progress of information is such, as to admit of the discovery of the chemical process of embalming. The Chinese, who are ignorant of the art of perfumes, preserve only the images of their ancestors; the Egyptians, as well as the Guanch, used to preserve the bodies themselves. If this was a matter of imitation, it would necessarily follow, that this custom, setting out from the Canaries, made

almost the tour of the world, in order to get to China. I have infinite respect for the case of the ancients, above all, for that of the natives of southern climates: I am sensible that heat renders them lazy and indolent. I am averse from obliging them to undertake such long voyages; and if you please, Sir, we will leave the Guanch, the Egyptians, and the Chinese, in quietness, isolated each by themselves, and caring very little one for the other: and you, who have so perfectly described man in all climates of the globe; you will tell me, that over the whole surface of the earth, men may have a respect for their ancestors, love the authors of their being, and, without one grain of imitation, express it in a similar manner. Our mummies, then, will be no proof that the Atlantides issued from the Canary isles. It should seem, that if the sea buried the Atlantis under its waves, leaving its mountains alone visible, the water which separates them ought not to be of so great a depth. The land that is recently overflowed makes a new sea, which has but a shallow bottom. I have never seen a journal of the soundings in those parts; but it has never come to my knowledge, that the mariner meets with more rocks and shallows there than any where else. We must therefore conclude, that there is actually no reason for placing the island Atlantis in the Canaries, except their contiguity to the Pillars of Hercules; but then we find in them no monument,

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no tradition, which corresponds to the relation of Plato, of Diodorus Siculus, and other Greek authors, who take notice of the Atlantis. On the contrary, these authors, while they mention numberless traditions, assign them constantly to other countries, far remote from the Canary isles. Let us suppose, however, for a moment, that those isles were the nursery of this nation of conquerors, and let us examine the route they must have pursued at the time of their famous invasion. It seems natural to imagine, that their fleet would land them in Africa: a chain of mountains still preserves the name of Atlas, the chief and father of this race; but this is by no means a convenient line of march for traversing Africa. Excuse me, Sir, if I conduct you across sands still burning, and which must have been much more so then, if the earth be actually falling in temperature. The Atlantides might have been much more embarrassed than you and me: they composed an army destined to conquer a great part of the world; and, indeed, I cannot conceive easily how they could exist in a desart of a hundred leagues in length, where is found neither water, nor the means of subsistence. If it should be said, by way of objection, that I am speaking of a country that nobody knows, I could answer, that it is unknown, because it is uninhabitable. Such was the idea entertained of it by the ancients. With difficulty could they suppose in it a few miserable

rable inhabitants, who never rose from their beds but to execrate the sun. Let us quit those inhospitable sands, where we are placed between two fires; the sun, which darts his perpendicular rays, and the earth, which reflects them in the same manner. The people of Atlantis never travelled by that way; they would prefer to pass by the sea-shore, refreshed by its vicinity to the water. They must, therefore, have directed their march through the kingdoms of Morocco, Fez, Algiers, Tunis, and Tripoli, which, in these days, are no better than receptacles of banditti. It must be confessed, that the Atlantides, who have left so many institutions, who founded so many cities in their passage, have done nothing for this extensive portion of their route. They gave it neither their gods, nor the names of their chiefs. If they had done so, the Phœnicians, who founded Carthage, or the Romans, who conquered and annexed it to their empire, would have given us some notice of it. This indifference in the conduct of the Atlantides, is by no means natural: it is not consistent with the maxims by which men are governed, when they set out in quest of a new country: they are disposed to enter into enjoyment as soon as they can: they begin to build habitations the moment a country appears inviting by its different advantages. The coast of Barbary was by no means a proper object of such neglect: it abounds in corn and fruits of excellent kinds;

kinds; it produces metals and gold; it maintains different races of animals, and above all, horses, whose spirit is only extinguished in death; a circumstance which affords a very material resource to a people who had so strong a desire to traverse the world. Besides, this coast recommended itself to their attention by the number of its sea-ports. The rich and plentiful condition of the country, the facility of carrying on trade by water-carriage, ought to have induced the Atlantides to settle, or at least to leave colonies behind them; for it is unwise to neglect what we have in possession, for what we have only in prospect.

After pursuing the whole line of coast, and finishing a long journey, without hearing one word of the Atlantides, we at length come to the mouths of the Nile, and arrive at Memphis. This city, as well as Saïs in the Delta, were full of their monuments and memorials. But the Egyptians did not always inhabit this lower part of Egypt: they inform us themselves, that it was once covered by the sea: they say that they descended from Upper Egypt, and that they dwelt at first in the city of Thebes, renowned for its hundred gates; and if we are inclined to listen to the Ethiopians, they will assure us that they are the ancestors of the native Egyptians. If the Atlantides, as it cannot be doubted, lived previous to this lost people, we must consequently refer their arrival to Ethiopia, or at least to Upper Egypt. Let us now,

Sir,

Sir, take up our residence at Thebes: the Nile descends towards the sea, and flies before us;—let us consider, towards the left, the vast and difficult march the Atlantides had to perform, before they could arrive from the Canaries all the way at Thebes, and the obstacles that were likely to have induced them to return as they came. Upper Egypt was defended in the south by the sea, and westward by impassable desarts; the country of Egypt would of necessity remain unknown to the Atlantides; that sea, those impracticable desarts, would have interrupted their progress, and they would have returned with speed towards that beautiful coast which they had despised. If, on the contrary, we turn our eyes towards the right, we shall perceive Asia, which has no such burning desarts as those of Africa; which is animated by a vast population, a living witness of its high antiquity; and which, above all, is replete with the institutions and memorials of the Atlantides. That this people, or their descendants, took possession of Egypt, I see no reason to doubt: this was the final period of their travels and conquests. But every other part of Africa is completely silent with regard to them: and since Asia resounds on all sides with the name and institutions of the Atlantides, if we wish to discover the line of their march, we have no occasion, it should seem, to make further inquiry. They came from Asia: this is a natural, and even a demonstrative

trative conclusion. One consideration alone can possibly detain us a moment longer in Africa: it is that of Mount Atlas, which bears their name, and of Lybia, to which Plato says they carried their conquests. I do not know at what time the name Atlas was applied to those mountains; but probably it was a consequence of the idea which placed the Atlantides in the Canary isles; and as it was necessary that they should traverse Africa in order to get to Egypt; and as Atlas reigned over a western and maritime country—the geographers created a kingdom for him in those deserts, and gave his name to the chain of mountains by which it is divided. Those mountains are also honoured with the name of the moon, though Diana reigned there as little as Atlas. As to Lybia, it is possible to find one, or perhaps even more of them, in Asia*. Nothing on earth is more common than this similarity of names, which are transported and applied to different places in the course of national colonizations. By orders of Francis the First, a new Madrid was built in the forest of Boulogne; the English carried the name of their country, as well as those of its principal towns, to North America; we possess on the same continent a second Orleans, Chartres, Toulouse. This detracts nothing

* Maximus of Tyr says, that the Lybians inhabited the country of the Hesperides, in dissert. xxxviii. c. 225. It will be seen by the Twenty-first Letter, that the garden of the Hesperides was not in Africa.

from

from the existence of our cities in Europe; and their rivals in America may one day produce no small confusion in history. The Lybia of Africa, as was the case in those instances, might receive the name of some more ancient province of Asia. Thus the appearances of things, as well as every philosophical probability, naturally lead us to pursue the traces of the Atlantides in Asia. We follow the voice of testimony: it is that which directs our course; and seeing it calls us to Asia, it is my business to conduct you thither.

I am, with respect, &c.

FIFTEENTH LETTER TO M. DE VOLTAIRE.

[The sequel of an inquiry concerning the Atlantes.]

Paris, 21st March, 1778.

HERE, then, Sir, we are again returned to Asia; it is the cradle of the world, and the centre of all antiquity; and it is here we ought to have sought the Atlantides at first, if it had not been necessary to recall certain moderns, who had wandered towards the western extremity of Africa; who had crossed the sea with Columbus, and pushed their researches even to the wilds of America. It is our business to efface old ideas, before we offer new ones of our own. If men chose to give the name Atlantis to the sea in which we find the Canary isles, whence they would pretend that the Atlantides issued, that name is of modern date: Asia presents us also with an Atlantic sea, bearing the same name since the days of Herodotus, a period of 2200 years. This author says, that the Atlantic sea, situated beyond the Pillars of Hercules, is no other than the Red Sea. Strabo and Diodorus Siculus have placed Arabia on the borders of this sea, to which the posterity

posterity of Atlas gave their name *. M. Baer, a corresponding member of our Academy of Sciences, is one of those employed in decyphering the enigma which Plato has left us. I quote him with sentiments of gratitude. He has discovered the Pillars of Hercules at a small distance from the Red Sea; that is to say, in the Temple of Hercules at Tyr. The statue of this god is always accompanied with two pillars, one of which is consecrated to fire, the other to the clouds and the winds. They used to have sometimes the name of pillars, sometimes that of *limits* or *boundaries* †. To name one of those pillars, was to mark or indicate a Temple of Hercules; these pillars signified then likewise limits; they were limits or points of repose in the progress of this illustrious traveller; the Temples of Hercules serve to denote his different stations. I shall not take time to examine whether we ought to consider Hercules as actually a chief deified after his death, or only an emblem of Nature; but I see in all this, a people, who, migrating from one country to another with their god, seating him down at every stage, at every place where they settle, and having erected a temple for prayer, there exhibit the symbols of his worship, and there inscribe the actual period of his

* Herodotus, lib. i. Strabo, lib. xvi. Diodorus Siculus, lib. iii. sec. 2o. t. i. p. 403. M. Baer, Essay upon the Atlantis, p. 41.

† Herodotus, lib. i. M. Baer, ibid. p. 47.

travels.

travels. Might it be possible, Sir, to discover the spirit or meaning of the consecration of those pillars? they were evidently a monument of gratitude, a mark of joy perfectly natural at the close of a long voyage or journey. Nations never travelled collectively in a body, but in quest of a fine country, a fertile soil, under the influence of a propitious sun; it is, therefore, plain to me, that one of those pillars was consecrated to celestial fire, or to the sun. But why was the other dedicated to the clouds and winds? It seems idle to resort to agriculture for a key to this dedication. Observations on adverse clouds and contrary winds must refer to a continued residence in one place. A people upon their first arrival are not agricultural; and the name of those pillars implies that they were set up at the *end* of a voyage, at the moment of their arrival. I perceive in them an indication that the Atlantides were navigators, that they came originally by sea, and that in dedicating those pillars from a sentiment of gratitude, they consecrated one of them to the sun, which they sought, and the other to the wind, which, by directing their course, enabled them to come up with him. This explanation appears to me equally natural and well founded in the true spirit of philosophical investigation. It coincides too with the conjecture I suggested before, concerning the origin of navigation. The Atlantides are one of the nations of the very

highest antiquity; the mythology, the worship of Egyptians, as well as of the Greeks, are among their institutions; probably they are by no means the only ones of which they were the authors. It is then extremely possible, that they were the first inventors of navigation; and this art, which we have at length carried to so high a pitch of perfection, took its rise, agreeably to my hypothesis, in an island.

Along the sea-coast, where we meet with the commercial cities of Tyr and Sidon, are situated Phœnicia and Judea. Mr. Baer is of opinion, that this last province is the Atlantis of Plato. He discovers certain resemblances between the names of the twelve sons of Jacob and the brothers of Atlas. Were we to suppose those relations of resemblance real, it would not be extraordinary. The Bible contains a most consistent, and the most faithfully preserved series of traditions; it is by far the purest source of history. But in spite of those resemblances, ingeniously stated and explained by M. Baer, we must not spend our time in Palestine; it is by no means there that we look for the termination of our inquiries. We ask for the island Atlantis; the country that lies between the Euphrates and the sea: it is not an island, and the words of Plato are far from being ambiguous upon this point.

But

But that the Atlantides travelled into this country, that they communicated to it some of their institutions, is a fact that it is impossible to call in question. The Scythians, become too numerous by a superabundant population, descended from their mountains, says Strabo *, and fell upon the kingdom of Pontus and Capadocia; and *Armoti*, one of their chiefs, built upon the river Thermodon a city named for himself, *Acmonia*. He afterwards entered Phrygia, and there built a second Acmonia †. Now, Sir, this Acmon was the father of Uranus, who married Titea his sister, as we learn from the text of Diodorus ‖. This Acmon was, therefore, one of the Atlantides, he conducted them into Phrygia, and the building of those cities was in the number of his achievements. You see, Sir, whether I had not reason, when I told you that the Atlantides were the common stock of the Phœnician and Egyptian nations. I observe, at the same time, that those events are of a high antiquity; since it appears, from very probable computations, that we must refer the building of Tyr, as well as that of Thebes in Egypt, to 2700 years before our æra. Acmon, a chief of the Atlantides, who came along with the

* Strabo, Geog. lib. ii.

† Stephanus, upon the word *Acmonia*. Mythology of Bannier. tom. ii. p. 21.

‖ See above, p. 53.

Scythians, and descended, like them, from Mount Caucasus, seems to direct us in our search for the Atlantis towards those mountains. But we have not yet examined all our evidence on the part of Phœnicia. Adonis was there an object of adoration: born of an incestuous commerce between Myrrah and her father Cinyras. Adonis was beautiful as the child of Love. Venus saw him, and became passionately in love with him: she quitted the bowers of Amathon for the forests of Lebanon, and followed her young lover to the chace. Diana, at the request of Mars, stung with jealousy, had the young prince attacked and slain by a wild boar. All that remained to Venus was a flower that grew from the blood of Adonis; it was anemone, or the wind-flower. Adonis descended to the shades; and, destined to captivate the heart of goddesses, inspired Proserpine with the same tender passion: and when Venus petitioned her father Jupiter for the recall of her lover, the master of the gods found himself not a little embarrassed between those two matrons, one of whom wished to have back what the other was no less desirous to retain. Their claims were the same; they were those of love; and the case admitted of an equitable division. Adonis revisited the light for six months annually, to enjoy the embraces of Venus; and was during the other six months in the arms of his nocturnal mistress. They instituted

a fes-

a festival in his honour, mourned for him once a year, and wept over his memory; while joy and festivity revived with the moment of his return to life. The same festivals were celebrated in Egypt during forty days in honour of Osiris, who had been lost and again found. It is impossible to deny the conformity of those usages of the two nations. The sun and moon were worshipped in Phœnicia under the name of Adonis and Astarte, as they were in Egypt under those of Isis and Osiris. We ought not to be astonished if there is some variation between those traditions: at a time when men were unacquainted with writing, they were liable to alteration. When fables travel from place to place, when they pass down through a series of ages, they become modified in the minds of men, and in the course of generations, like animals or vegetables, transplanted to a new soil. As the physical constitution of beings is determined by the temperature of climate, so is the nature of our ideas in consequence of the peculiar character it impresses upon us. Besides, you know, Sir, how much, in the course of ages, the same fact will vary in two nations, from a love of the marvellous, from a defect of memory, and from an ardency of the imagination. It is a great deal, if, after a long period of time, the principal traits are so much the same as still to preserve a resemblance; and nobody can mis-

take this similarity of features in the two fables of Osiris and Adonis. We will admit then, with the ancients, with Macrobius and Plutarch, that those two modes of worship were originally the same. We shall not enter into an inquiry, whether those divinities were deified men; where there is so much obscurity, such questions are difficult, and always ill resolved; but if Osiris ever was a man, placed in the sun after his death, invested with his attributes and worship, you will not be puzzled with the travels the Egyptians ascribe to him extending all the way from the uninhabitable sands of India * to the frozen bear. You are not to become the dupe of a national vanity: provided a people have but some claim to antiquity, they are not to be satisfied unless all originate with them; they wish to be considered the centre and source of every thing. With your leave, Sir, we will invert the travels of Osiris; we will make him perform them in a contrary order; and we will say, that setting out from the frozen regions of the bear, he descended to the uninhabitable sands of India, that is to say, of Ethiopia, and as far as the extreme heat of the Torrid Zone would suffer him to advance: but, at the same time, Osiris, the issue of Saturn, one of the gods of the Atlantides, refers us to this people for the origin of the fable. Here then is another presumption, the

* India, by which was meant Ethiopia. Hist. d'Astr. Anc. p. 294.

tendency of which is to make this people descend from some northern country, more or less in the vicinity of the bear. As the Atlantides were not natives of Egypt, and as they travelled not by the way of Africa, they must necessarily have passed through Phœnicia, and there planted the worship of Adonis and the sun, previously to their communicating it to Egypt. This is neither a mere supposition nor a philosophical hypothesis, but a matter of fact attested by Lucian. According to that philosopher, the worship of Adonis was introduced into Phœnicia by Deucalion. Deucalion was the son of Prometheus, a designation which, strictly speaking, might signify no more than a descendant of that prince, who inhabited Caucasus, where the fable makes an eagle prey upon his liver. Whatever be the real meaning of this fable, Prometheus was born in Asia; his mother, as it has been said, was called by the name of *Asia*; he is related to the Atlantides by his brother Atlas *, and to Caucasus by the rock upon which the fable has fixed him. Thus it is to the Atlantides, a people constantly referred back to Caucasus, from which they descended, that properly belongs the institution of the worship of Adonis and Osiris.

We have no reason to doubt that this worship had the sun for its object: this was the opinion of

* Hesiod, Theogony, v. 508. Bannier, Mythology, t. ii. p. 117.

Plutarch and Macrobius, more learned on this subject than we moderns, because they lived much nearer the sources of antiquity; they have been followed by the bulk of writers in later times. M. L'Abbé Bannier, however, is by no means of the same mind; he cannot admit that the mourning for Adonis, and the joy at his restoration to life, could be emblematical of the absence of the sun and of his return. "Does the sun (says he), when he withdraws from us in winter, go down to the shades? Does he abandon the human race particularly in Syria and Phœnicia, where winter is so short, and often more agreeable than summer? Had they been Laplanders, or Siberians, who instituted this festival, one might have thought that the total absence of the sun had suggested the idea; but it is impossible to conceive this of the inhabitants of Syria, who enjoy a uniformly serene sky, and where the inequality in the length of the day is so inconsiderable. Besides, were this system founded in truth, they ought to have celebrated the festival of Adonis at different times of the year, and at the distance of six months the one from the other: instead of this, its celebration happened only once a year, and in a month remote from both equinoxes, which would have better marked the moment when the sun begins to withdraw from or to approach the Pole *."

* Bannier, Mythology, t. i. p. 359

M. L'Abbé

M. L'Abbé Bannier pleads my cause. He cannot believe the ingenious explanation of Macrobius, when he supposes it an invention of the Phœnicians; but he would have given it full credit, if it had taken its rise in Siberia: the difficulties he sees and complains of are natural. The motive that entered into the festivals of Adonis, the spirit of his worship and ceremonies, were an enigma: the idea which I have suggested to you, Sir, the original sources discovered in the north, afford a key to the enigma. Observe, I entreat you, the progress of things; observe how the ideas cohere, and how evidence is the result of their union. Plutarch and Macrobius knew the motives of those usages in their source; as for us, we find it difficult to believe that those motives could be of Syrian extraction, where they seem to have been naturally aliens: it has required fifteen centuries to find out those northern origins, which render those motives probable, and which refer them back to the physical constitution of climate. It was by no means necessary to separate mourning and joy by an interval of half a year, as L'Abbé Bannier imagines. It is nowhere but at the Pole that the sun's death is of six month's continuance: as we descend to lower latitudes, we find the period of the sun's life increases; he ceases to live or to appear for a longer or shorter time: under the latitude of sixty-eight degrees he is lost, like Osiris, only for forty days.

Here

Here then we have the period of mourning determined. The equinoxes are not the moments when the sun begins to approach or retire from the Poles; he changes his course only at the solsticial points: risen to the highest, or fallen to the lowest limit, he recommences his descent or ascent. The festival, placed at a time remote from both equinoxes, was observed at the epoch of the solstice; and this is another circumstance which clearly points out the motive which L'Abbé Bannier can by no means admit. Meanwhile, Sir, we might apply to this festival of Adonis, of Osiris, or of the sun, lost and recovered, every thing that we advanced on the death and revival of the phœnix *. The star of day dies as little in Syria as he does in Egypt; there winter is unknown; one scarcely perceives that the sun's elevation is less above the horizon. The individual who suffers no inconvenience from those changes, will neither mourn nor rejoice on their account. If he has any thing to complain of, it is the excessive heat of summer, and the return of the sun, which is the cause of it. The physical nature of the climate is, then, contrary to the spirit of the festival; they ought to have rejoiced at the death of Adonis, and lamented at his revival. However, Sir, Syria and Egypt were crowded with temples and cities dedicated to the sun; he was worshipped under the name

* Eighth Letter to M. De Voltaire

of Heliogabalus, in the city of Emesa*. Near Lebanon stood Heliopolis, afterwards Balbeck †, so famous for its ruins at this day. We find another Heliopolis in Egypt, with the great Thebes, more in the vicinity of the Tropic; the city where the phœnix returned to life, and where the sun was still the object of adoration ‖. He was likewise worshipped in the city of Tyr, under the name of Hercules. M. De Gebelin has shewn, by reasons highly probable, that the labours and life of this hero were nothing more than allegories, derived from the course of the sun.

I have related in my Ancient History a fable, at that early period intimately connected with astronomy. Hercules, says this fable, proceeds in his way towards Scythia; but frozen and shivering by the icy north, he lies down on his lion's skin: as he awakes he misses his horses, and he traverses Scythia in order to find them ¶. Hercules, deprived of his horses, is the sun, which, at the solstice, is for some time stationary, without rising or descending, in respect of the Poles: he reposes on his lion's skin, and, in fact, for this reason; that the summer solstice was, in old times, placed in the sign of the Lion. But why is the scene laid in Scythia? The sun does not

* M. Danville, Geog. Anc. tom. ii. p. 134.
‖ Ibid. p. 135.
† Ibid. tom. iii. p 22, and 34.
¶ M. De Gebelin, Oriental Allegories, p. 246.

rise

rise to a great height but in India, and the southern parts of Persia: he is very far from reaching the zenith in the climates of Scythia. Besides, why does Hercules, or the sun, arrive there cold and shivering? Is not this a picture of his feeble and languid rays; rays transmitted obliquely, like those which penetrate into the most northern regions of Scythia? One seldom finds his amusement in painting what he never experienced. How should a man get the idea of a cold sun where he is burning hot? How could he say that he comes cold and shivering, when he arrives in all his fire, and clothed in all the glory of his orb? It is impossible to admit ideas so inconsistent. As it cannot be doubted that Hercules is an emblem of the sun, we must conclude that this emblem, relative to the sun of Scythia, was introduced into Syria, as well as the worship of Osiris and Adonis, symbols also of the sun, which only dies in those climates. These facts, and their various interpretations, Sir, lead us to inquire in what manner institutions come to be established in a country, and what are the ideas and sentiments which give rise to them. That the sun was worshipped in Syria and in Egypt, is sufficiently proven by the cities which were dedicated to his honour. But let us forget those cities; let us divest ourselves of all knowledge of antiquity. The various modes of worship over the globe have vanished for us; and I address myself to you, a phi-

a philosopher, a poet of nice sensibility, who have so happily caught physical impressions, and the emotions of Nature, in all situations: I shew you the sun, the fairest work of the Creator, and the most useful of all his gifts to man; and I ask you, in what climates he would first become the object of religious worship? Methinks you answer me—the beneficence of the sun cannot be every where equally felt: one must know something of natural philosophy, before he can appreciate his power over vegetation: his activity is less marked in those fertile regions which share most largely in his bounty. Sometimes, by being too powerful, his activity becomes hurtful, and even destructive. In the Torrid Zone, where he reigns like an enraged despot, he receives the execrations of his subjects*. On the other side of the Tropics, in India and Persia, his authority is still an abuse of power: they fly him, they avoid his looks, like those of a tyrant: they travel in the night: night is the season of pleasure and love. Nothing is seen but palaces of marble, and *jets deaux*: they talk with rapture of those sweet shades which afford an asylum against the fervours of his dreaded rays. If ever gratitude raised altars in those climates, they would be consecrated to woods and to rivulets; but it could never come into their minds to offer religious worship to the sun. In climates more mild and tempe-

* Herodotus, lib. iv. Strabo, lib. xvii.

rate,

rate, where men experience heat only in a useful degree, it is almost habitual; but what they see every day, they neither admire nor adore. Man has the highest value for the good things he desires and expects: the surest way to render him ungrateful, is to load him with benefits. The peasant, hardened by painful labour, sees the morning spring without admiration: the heat of noon-day invites him to sleep: he looks towards the evening with desire, as the season of rest: each day's rising sun is to him the harbinger of toil. But in these climates the seasons are various, and the affections of the mind are diversified like them. Man saddens during winter: he rejoices at the opening of spring, which unlocks to him all its treasures: he feels the influence of the sun warming the frame of Nature, and kindling the passion of love: even the birds, in concert with man, salute him with songs and hymns. The poet of the south sings of shades and bowers: the praises of spring are celebrated only in the Temperate Zone: it is there a devotion for the sun commences; but it diffuses itself over the globe, with shades of difference, like the heat of climate; or, to express it more precisely, it increases in proportion as the heat abates: and, if we would appreciate the effects of [illegible], we ought to examine it in those places [illegible] exists in all its energy. We are so much [illegible] grateful, that we have been unfortunate.

Are

Are we born to a severe climate,
abandons for some part of the year?—
us what he bestows, by what he takes
absence: every thing languishes, ev
around us. If man is enabled to exis
of his constitution, he feels it enfeeble
in the fluids of our frame slackens wi
of the rivers: man begins to conce
and life might cease entirely. The de
darts towards the absent sun: he look
Saviour, with whom he shall agai
hymns are poured forth, as he edges
zon. If ever there is a time when h
a succouring god, it is the moment wh
first ray to this afflicted land. Tire
fatigued with his absence, which he
year after year, at length man deter
him: he breaks up his dwelling, h
the sun, and draws nearer the Equa
he lights upon a milder climate, mois
derate heat, he blesses the sun for h
sence, and adores the benefactor who
find. The natives of hot climates, b
to a sluggish effeminacy, which deali
tions: they have too little activity t
of a lively feeling of gratitude. Th
most part, teazing and troublesome
always in the public eye. In the

east, men adore a despotic master, whom they never see: nobody can adore the sun, whom they see day after day.

These principles seem to me to be founded in truth. I can scarcely conceive it possible, that men should with-hold their assent from the evidence they carry along with them. Had those ideas presented themselves first, you should have seen, Sir, with what contempt ideas of a contrary nature would have been discarded. But opinion, as it grows old, becomes blind: it is the misfortune of truth, that it comes so late. Still, however, I have so strong an impression of the solidity of those ideas, that I am not without a hope, they will come to be felt and adopted. It appears impossible to me, that the worship of the sun should have taken its rise either in Syria or Egypt: it was introduced into those countries, as that of Adonis had been by the Scythian Deucalion. In fact, we find that the Messagetæ, a Scythian nation, situated beyond the Iaxartes*, had, and perhaps alone, the worship of the sun†. This star is adored, then, towards the forty-five or fifty degree of latitude, and in temperate regions, where he is visible every day to such as may have descended from the north in quest of him. This northern origin, attributed to the god of light and heat, is not so extraordinary, as to be

* M. Danville, Geog. Anc. tom. ii. p. 318.

† L'Abbé Banniér, Mythol. tom. i. p. 670.

void

void of evidence; the Greeks themselves supply us with a proof of it. Had they not a northern or Hyperborean Apollo? What ought we to understand by an Apollo of the north, if he is not a god of those cold regions; an alien god, who in process of time was adopted in Greece? The gods originate in the countries where their worship commences: their travels mean nothing more than the communication of that worship to other parts of the earth. Apollo killed the Cyclops, and hid his dart behind a mountain of the Hyperboreans*. Scythia contained a people named the Arimaspes, who, like the Cyclops, had but one eye†. Apollo hiding his dart behind a mountain, in the country of the Hyperboreans, has a good deal the air of the sun setting to those countries, not to rise for some considerable time. Moreover, Sir, the veneration of the Hyperboreans for Apollo, is a fact of history, which is found also in fables. This country was the birth-place of Latona. Its inhabitants, to a man, are priests of her son: they sing hymns continually in his praise; and the cities are filled with musicians, who are daily employed in celebrating the acts of his beneficence. The king, who is the high-priest, is of the lineage of Boreas. Apollo presents himself, and descends once every nineteen years, at the re-commencement of the lunar

* Hygin. Astron. Poet. lib. ii. c. 13.

† M. Danville, Geog. Anc. tom. ii. p. 321.

cycle, among his favourite people*. When Ovid relates the quarrel of Latona and Niobe, and the death of the children of this proud and spirited matron, slain before her eyes by the arrows of Apollo and Diana, one sees that the Greeks applied the facts and fables of antiquity to the names of their own history; for Ovid makes Niobe the daughter of one of the Pleiades, and a grandchild of Atlas: Latona, begotten by the giant Ceus †, was of the family of the Titans ‖; beloved of Jupiter, she became the mother of the god of day, and of the chaste goddess of night. These histories and fables, then, have a constant reference to a northern climate, where Diodorus gives birth to Latona, and where the sun, her offspring, was a distinguished object of adoration; at the same time, they have a relation to the Atlantides, who appear to have descended from Caucasus, and who being the same with the Titans ¶, included the descent of Niobe, Latona, and their children. Let us observe, Sir, that those confessions of the Greeks are valuable; it is the truth, which, like lightning, escapes from a thick cloud in which it is absorbed. The Greeks, by arrogating every thing to themselves, have disfigured the page of history: every

* Diodorus of Sic. lib. ii. tom. i. p. 307, &c.
† Diodorus, lib. v. tom. ii. p. 303.
‖ Ovid. Metam. lib. vi.
¶ Ibid. tom. ii. p. 307.

thing

thing that had but a little celebrity, must have taken its rise among them. They had no motive of interest to invent those northern origins: and there it is that falsehood and national vanity are silent: they speak truly sometimes, when they happen to betray themselves. The worship of Osiris in Egypt, of Adonis in Syria; in a word, the worship of the sun in general, is of high antiquity: it ascends to more than 2800 years before the Christian Æra. At this epoch, men travelled little, or none at all: nations confined themselves to their own bounds, and individuals lived in their families. We may conclude, then, from those solitary manners alone, that if the modes of worship, the fables of the north, came to be known in the south, it is because they had been there introduced. But the principles of sound metaphysics, as well as the dictates of a sober philosophy, shew us, that when we consider the nature of man, we perceive that the worship of the sun could take its rise no where but in the north. Traditions collected by the Greeks (a people more restless and addicted to travel than other nations), point out the traces of this worship on the other side of Caucasus itself. We remark, even in those fables which they took to themselves, but which they have but ill disguised, that the worship of Osiris and Adonis belongs to a much higher northern latitude than Caucasus. The same traditions conduct us in the path

of the Anlantides to the very foot of those mountains: the worship of the sun is established every where in this tract, from Scythia all the way to Ethiopia. The Osiris of Egypt, the Hercules of Tyr, are of the family of Atlas. This people are, then, the original authors of all manner of institutions: those magnificent temples of the sun are their works; his worship and ceremonies were the fruits of their genius; every thing that belongs to mythology, idolatry, flows from the same source; Saturn, Jupiter, Juno, Proserpine, Apollo, Diana, Minerva, Hercules, originated among them. We never think of placing our Pharamond any where but among the Francs. The Romulus of the Latins was not an Egyptian. We have seen nations disguise the history of others, in the view of appropriating it to themselves: we have never seen them take it from themselves, in order to bestow it upon strangers. We must acknowledge, that the Atlantides have had a mighty influence over the old world. If those names of fable be merely allegorical, every thing ingenious in them belongs to the Atlantides: if the fable be a real tradition, but, been altered in its descent, ancient history is entirely their's; they have executed, they have produced every thing in Phœnicia, Asia Minor, Greece, Egypt; and their traces subsist in the ruins of monuments consecrated to the usages which this people prescribed. Facts, then, as they

accu-

accumulate, render them still more interesting. However, Sir, this people is lost, as well as they who were the authors of the sciences: they have no longer an asylum on earth: every thing whispers their memory, except the country which they left for the conquest of a part of the universe. This silence of their country, I own, surprizes me: it must have remained desart, or it must have disappeared, as Plato informs us. It is our business, who are engaged in an inquiry concerning this people, to produce their traces; but stopped short by Mount Caucasus, ought I to invite you to pass over it, in order to enter those cold regions, now almost a desart, from which descended those robbers of nations and empires, those tygers who devoured the lambs of the south? The most flourishing empires have been founded in usurpation. I am much afraid, the Atlantides, though extremely ancient, had a little of the tyger in them, as well as their successors. I do not venture to tell you, that the Atlantides were robbers, like the rest; perhaps they were said to invade those countries which they only animated by their spirit, and peopled with their institutions. In order to throw light upon this difficulty, we must interrogate the rest of Asia. I am more inclined to conduct you into Persia: it is a country cherished by the bounty of heaven: you will there find that sun which you love: it is the country of poetry, produced by the influence of

that star. With a view to obtain instruction, I must try to conciliate the good will of those people. I will present myself with your works in my hand: I will read your verses, and say to them, there is the man who has perfected the fine art which you, perhaps, had the merit of inventing.

I am, with respect, &c.

SIXTEENTH LETTER TO M. DE VOLTAIRE.

[On the ancient Persians, and their ancient history.

Paris, 26th March, 1778.

As we enter Persia, Sir, we get into another world; but it is an ancient world: there one observes, at each step, the vestiges of an antique cultivation, and those grand monuments which are the achievements of time and power. You know, Sir, the singular sculptures of which M. Danville has favoured us with a description*; those gigantic figures cut in the rock, and which form vast bas-reliefs: they are said to be a monument of the glory of Semiramis. Be that as it may, one thing is certain, that the tradition of it is lost. If it really belongs to the reign of that princess, it must be referred to very remote ages, to a period more than twenty centuries before our æra; but the truth is, it is impossible to ascertain its antiquity. Semiramis belongs to the fabulous history of Persia: she had her reign in those beginnings, in those origins of things, where the whole is involved in obscurity; whence, however, some great names

* Mem. de l'Acad. des Belles Lettres.

escape, to be handed down with time, but without witnesses, without proofs, and accompanied only by their fame. This is a people proud and supercilious, like those noble families who are afraid of mixing the breed, and who, at the same time, know nothing of its source. From the time we quitted Phœnicia, names, ideas, are no longer the same: history has undergone a change. Observe those men dressed in long white garments, the head encircled with a tiara; these priests are the philosophers of the nation; they are the Magi, who bear the most ancient name for wisdom*. The temples are no longer adorned with statues; the gods no longer present themselves in the human form; the element of the greatest activity in Nature, serves to represent the Supreme Power; the Magi surround the altar from which the flame ascends, which carries their prayers to the throne of the Eternal.

We have travelled but a little way, Sir, and to what a change! Idolatry has quite disappeared: the worship here is pure, like the fire which receives the pious homage of the natives. From those different modes of religion and manners, arises the light of History. Though Nature has placed the Persians contiguous to the Phœnicians, one sees clearly that they have not the same origin; or at least, that having sprung from branches subsequent to their separa-

* In the oriental languages, *magus* signifies wise.

tion,

tion, before they could approximate each other by local vicinity, manners had rendered them aliens one to another. If a divergency in the branches of a single emigration, extending from place to place, and from age to age, gave birth to the Phœnicians, the Phrygians, the inhabitants of Egypt, of Asia Minor, of Greece, and Italy, the Persians are the offspring of a different emigration. We can require no other proof of this, than the prominent features of character we have just remarked.

This circumstance gives me some concern. I fear we have lost the tract of the Atlantides. Saturn, Atlas, Jupiter, Hercules, are names quite unknown. Time, however, may divide families as it pleases; some of their ancient titles will remain. Let us look into the archives of history: before we consult religion and philosophy, we must sound tradition. We will question the Magi, with whom it is deposited. You have said, that all philosophers are brothers; that all enlightened men belong to the same country. I ask them in your name: they can deny nothing to the Magus of Ferney. Here, then, is what they reveal to me.

In ancient times, there existed in the east a race of beings, named *Dives* and *Peris* by the Persians, and *Ginn* by the Arabs. The Greeks transformed them into their *Dios*, the Romans into their *Divus*, and we moderns into *Genius*. We must remark, that this

this race ought to have been esteemed of a superior and excellent nature, since it serves to denote the Supreme Being, as well as the rarest talent of the human mind. Its name implies, at this day, the thing on earth which men admire and honour the most. You, Sir, upon whom Nature has bestowed the gift of genius, you ought to take a particular interest in this illustrious race: you are their heir.

We are told, that God, before he formed Adam, created the Dives, and gave them the government of the world for seven thousand years. The Peris, who succeeded them, possessed the earth for two thousand years more*. The Dives were strong, and mighty in stature: they were giants†. The Peris were better and wiser. Fable, which disguises every thing with which it incorporates, says that the Dives were male, and the Peris female. These two species, in all events, kept distinct, and were not united by the attractions of sex; nay, they were rather enemies to each other. I am astonished they should represent the Dives as so wicked. I have considerable faith in the etymology of names, believing as I do, that it is the best preserved tradition of ancient ideas. Thus I find in the east, that *divan* means an assembly of ministers, the depositaries of power; a word which corresponds to that of *council* with us. The Orien-

* Herbelot, Biblioth. Orient. p. 290.

† Ibid. p. 387.

talists,

talists, then, denote authority, by the idea of force or power, which they borrowed from the word dives; in the same manner as we denote authority by the idea of wisdom contained in the word council. These terms are, at the same time, descriptive of the manners of the two countries. A man reigns in Asia because he is strong or powerful: he commands in Europe because he is wise. This is not all, Sir; the word divan also signifies a collection of writings, of ideas *, in one word, of instruction. Hence conclude, that the Dives were enlightened as well as powerful, since, in spite of the hatred they incurred, and the reproach of wickedness with which they were loaded, the tradition of their knowledge, as well as power, has been preserved in the language of those who execrated their race.

Gian, or Gian-ben-Gian, was monarch of the Peris, or Fies. He was no less famous for his military expeditions, than for the magnificence of his works. The pyramids of Egypt are monuments of his powerful resources. The shield of this prince, equally renowned with that of Achilles, was long preserved and handed down as a part of the hereditary regalia from one generation to another. It was a mysterious shield, and would have required a poet like Homer to give us a description of it: a shield which was not employed against the weapons of

* Herbelot, p. 298.

ordinary

ordinary warfare, but against those of magic. Astronomy presided over its composition; it served to destroy charms, enchantments; and this tradition refers back to those ancient times, useful as well as pernicious arts. Gian-ben-Gian reigned over the Peris 2000 years. After this period *Eblis* (the devil *) was sent by God to expel them, on account of their disorderly conduct, and to confine them in the remotest corner of the earth. Gian-ben-Gian was attacked, routed in a general engagement, and the nation dispersed. I beg, Sir, you will observe, that I offer you an answer to the most pressing of your objections; I give you the notice which you ask of my anterior people. Those traditions evidently imply the notion of a people destroyed and lost. The Orientalists have expressed it in an old epitaph, where we read: *What is become of the people of Gian, the sons of Gian? Consider to what time has reduced them* †. You see that the Asiatics answer you themselves, and lead you by the hand to the origin of their race, in order to shew you the people to whom I have called your attention. You do not require that I should lay before you their national annals, their books of science, and the part

* The same with *Azazel*, *Schcitan* in Arabic, *Satan* in Hebrew. Herbelot says, that the word *Eblis* is formed from the Greek word *Diabolos*, p. 307; but this should rather be formed from the other.

† Herbelot, p. 396.

they

they had in the institutions that still exist. In bringing them before you, I shall give evidence against myself; whatever is ancient is but very little known. I have shewn you, on one hand, institutions which challenge authors worthy of our highest praise; on the other, I have pointed out to you among the Atlantides, men who have peopled a part of the world, and left their spirit in a far spread, and long revered mode of worship. I here invite your attention to a people equally ancient, who have transmitted their memory to posterity, with an idea of power and instruction, a people to whom are attributed monuments of a very imposing kind, such as the pyramids of Egypt. This people, who have had such a powerful influence on the affairs of the world, might have given birth to the science of astronomy, which was afterwards almost forgotten.

Salomon, or Soliman, was the generic name of the ancient and powerful monarchs of the east; the Orientalists reckon no fewer than seventy-two of them. The mountain of *Caf* contained a gallery erected by a giant, whose name was *Argenk*. In it stood the statues of those Solimans, frequently under figures of a very extraordinary kind; some had several heads, and a number of hands; others wore the heads of an elephant, of a buffalo, of a wild boar. You discern, Sir, in this tradition, the origin of those idols charged with an infinity of

heads

heads or hands, which are found in Siberia, as well as in India *, and even in Japan. *Canoun*, or Fanoun, was the capital of this race of Solimans. Three of them reigned there a thousand years; the most authentic, that is to say, they whose names have been preserved, are nine † in number. *Caherman-Catel* found in the country of *Schadoukian* a marble pillar of extraordinary length and thickness, upon a base which bore an inscription engraven in Bialbanic characters, unknown at the present day to the Orientalists, but at that time very intelligible: it began in this manner, *I am Soliman Hakki* ‖. If we add this name to the other nine, we shall have the ten generations reckoned by Berosus before the deluge.

Caiumarath was, according to the Persians, the first of their kings, the first king of the world, and the same with Adam of the Hebrews. Whatever be his antiquity, no Persian disputes that he was the first who ascended a throne, and levied tribute upon the people. This tribute was no more than a reasonable mark of their gratitude. He had drawn them from the caverns which they used to inhabit, and engaged them to build houses and cities; he invented certain stuffs as a substitute for skins, with which they covered themselves, and the sling as a weapon

* See the Third Letter to M. De Voltaire.

† Herbelot, p. 820.

‖ Idem, ibidem.

for

for their defence. But if Caiumarath was the first to ascend a throne, he was the first also to resign it: he descended to the level of other men, to adore the Supreme Being and repose in tranquillity before him. He had one surviving son, *Siamek*, upon whom he bestowed the crown at taking leave of the world; but his son died soon after, being assassinated by the giants. The father re-ascended the throne for the purpose of avenging his son and recovering his body. It was upon the occasion of his interment that he ordered a fire to be kindled upon his grave: he desired that this fire might be maintained and kept alive; and hence arose the worship of fire in Persia *. But this origin is not very happily conceived: it has a reference neither to necessity nor Nature, which alone can render institutions fixed and permanent. It is plain that the Persians, in their uncertainty concerning its origin, have been desirous to make their worship more ancient and imposing, by attributing it to the first of their kings. *Huschenk*, son of Siamek, and grandson of Caiumarath, succeeded him in the throne. This name signifies wise and prudent. They gave him, with the consent of the people, the surname of *Pischdad*, which signifies the legislator and the just, because he was the author of the most ancient laws of the east. This honourable title descended to his successors,

* Herbelot, p. 215.

who

who composed the dynasty of the *Pischdadians*. It was he who explored the mines from which he extracted metals for the purposes of agriculture and war; he watered the country by means of canals; he founded the city of *Soüs*, in modern times the city of Suza, that of Ispahan, that of Babel, or Babylon: those origins are, as you well believe, very uncertain. It is equally improbable that this prince is the author of a book, intitled *The Eternal Wisdom*, and surnamed the Testament of Huschenk. You will not deem this testament of more authenticity than that of Cardinal Richlieu: but if this cardinal had not been an eminent statesman, nobody would have published, under his name, observations, good or bad, on the subject of government. If Huschenk had not been a wise and enlightened monarch; if he had not left a very high character behind him, men would not have imputed to him this book of the wisdom of the times, a work which merits our esteem, and which still exists. The military expeditions of this prince are described in a species of romance. It would be unfair in us to treat it with ridicule, since we have the histories of the knights of the round table, and of the twelve peers of Charlamagne. We have no intention to dig into antiquity in order to find a basis for our own fables; our ignorance descends to times pretty modern; but, after all, those same fables are sufficient proof that

Amadis,

Amadis, Rolland, were gallant French knights, whose military exploits attracted and merited the exaggeration of the people and the embellishments of the poet. Our verdict ought to be the very same as to Persian romances. Huschenk, according to them, performed his warlike achievements mounted on a horse with twelve feet, which he had infinite difficulty to manage. This animal, of a breed obtained from the copulation of a crocodile and female hyppopotamus, was found in *Dry Island*, or New Continent. Force, as well as great address, was required to tame him; but as soon as Huschenk was able to command him, he levelled with the dust every giant that came in his way; nor did a people exist whom he was not prepared to subdue. You observe, Sir, that heroes have at all times had marvellous horses. This unfortunate prince, however, was killed by a large fragment of a rock which his enemies the giants hurled against him in a defile of the mountains of Damavend *.

The Dives, whom the devil had driven to the ends of the earth, existed still, and had their cantonments in the mountain of Caf. I shall explain elsewhere, the real position of those mountains. The Dives employed their time in harrassing the Peris with unremitting hostilities, as well as in carrying their arms into Persia and India, while they lodged their booty

* Herbelot, p. 464.

in deep caverns. You see, Sir, the ancient source of our popular ideas, that the devils hoard and conceal treasure in the recesses of the mountains, or in the ruins of deserted castles. Thahamurath, the grandson of Huschenk, was the third king of Persia. He was a hero, and a most formidable enemy of the Dives; he was surnamed Div-bend, the conqueror of the Dives or giants. He attacked, beat, and pursued them every where; and after totally routing them, kept them in close confinement in subterraneous grottos. You have read, Sir, the *Mille et un Jour*, tales which afford a picture of the manners and belief prevalent in the east: you will recollect to have met with the *Affrites*, genii of a maleficent nature, and hence detained in chains in the bowels of the earth. Thahamurath founded cities, such as Babylon, Nineveh, Amida, Diarbeck; at the same time, I will not pledge myself for the veracity of those traditions; I relate to you fables wherein we endeavour to discover ancient truths, as Virgil extracted gold from the dunghill of Ennius.

Thahamurath, like Huschenk, had his horse, a horse, however, of still greater fleetness and rarity. It was a bird named Simorg-anka; they used to call him the great bird, the incomparable bird, the wonderful griffon. This bird possesses reason, knows all languages, and is capable of religion*; they give us

* Herbelot, p. 1016.

his

his history at no greater length. But may not this bird be the phœnix of northern invention, transported to Egypt, and whose description and history may have been altered in the east? I am the more inclined to this opinion, that when we listen to this bird, he says of himself, that he has seen creatures and revolutions of ages before the days of Adam *. He saw the beginning and end of twelve times the grand age of seven thousand years; and though so old, and so excellently informed, he is ignorant how many more of these things he has still to see †. This being, who has witnessed so many things in a state of succession to each other, may very probably be the sun, who enlightens the generations of men and empires, and continues the same whilst all things on earth decay and pass away. The mountains of Caf were no doubt at a great distance, inasmuch as Thahamurath had occasion for his bird to conduct him thither; he there gave assistance to the Peris, and vanquished the giants Argenk and *Domrush*. This last kept in prison Mergian-peri, that is to say, the Fée Mergian, who is our acquaintance: thanks to Thahamurath, who achieved her deliverance; she found her way into Egypt, where she was naturalized. This Fée involved the prince in a fresh war with her enemy the giant Houdkouz; but whe-

* Herbelot, p. 810, 811.

† Ibid. p. 1017.

ther it was that he had not his horse, or that the inevitable moment of his destiny was come, he perished on that occasion.

Giamschid, his brother, or nephew, succeeded him: it is he who founded the city Estkekar, or Persepolis; I have made mention of him in the history of ancient astronomy *. This prince, after a reign of seven hundred years, fancied himself immortal, and aspired to divine honours. God punished his impiety; he was dethroned, and passed a hundred years travelling over the world. The Asiatics give him the name of *Dhulcarnein*, which signifies, with two horns; an epithet applied to conquerors who had subdued the two extremities of the globe, the east and west. Alexander merited and obtained this surname; he was the second conqueror of Asia in the memory of eastern nations †. The usurper *Zohac* was a prince of cruel dispositions; the Orientalists have charged his memory with the invention of punishments ‖. Feridoun, the son of Giamschid, re-ascended the throne after his death. This young prince re-conquered his kingdom with the assistance of a blacksmith, who, having raised a popular insurrection in his favour, made a standard of his leathern apron tied to the end of a lance, and merited so highly of his sovereign, that

* Herbelot, 129 and 353.
† Ibid. p. 395 and 317.
‖ Ibid. p. 948.

after

after the expulsion of the usurper, Feridoun preserved this singular ensign, adorned it with precious jewels, and converted it into the banner of the kings of Persia. It fell into the hands of the Arabs, in a battle they obtained over the Persians, under the Caliphat of Omar; and it is said that the whole army were enriched by their share in those precious spoils. Feridoun having made the usurper Zohac prisoner, kept him close confined in the mountains of Damavend. These mountains, as well as those of Caf, were used for the purpose of universal prisons; there they shut up giants and malefactors; in short, it was the Siberia of the empire. This is the place to which the devil banished the Dives; to it also men were in the habit of driving back their enemies. Feridoun was one of the Persian heroes; it is even uncertain whether he is not Dhulcarnein, celebrated in ancient history, and whose tradition does not enable us to specify either his time or his proper name. He was a wise man; it was he who used to say, that *the life of man is a journal in which we ought to enter nothing but good actions. When a good man is about to pass into the other world, what does it signify to him whether he dies on a throne or in the street?* Feridoun, however, was not wise enough to act up to this sage indifference; he ought to have died upon a throne, but he chose to resign it, and parcelled out his estates. The eldest of his

sons took Persia, the two others Tartary and China. He retired from the world like Caiumarath; nor was he happier than him in his retreat, which was disturbed by the ambition and quarrels of his sons. He thought proper to resume the reins of administration; but the political ties once dissolved, are not easily restored: a king who re-ascends the throne, holds it ever after by a weak tenure. Feridoun was treated with insult by his undutiful children; *Irage*, his eldest and favourite son, was assassinated, and they had the cruelty to send him his head. *Manugeher*, son of *Irage*, avenged by the death of his uncles the murder of his father, and the insult offered to his grandfather *. But effeminacy had crept upon the people over whom he reigned: Persia was no longer able to defend itself against Tartary: it has been the lot of the south to be at all times enslaved by the north. *Afrasiab*, son of one of his uncles, made a war upon him of long continuance; Manugeher found it extremely difficult to preserve an empire which was in its decline. The last kings were *Nauder*, the son of Manugeher, *Zab*, *Gustab* *; but this kingdom, continually embroiled by the inroads of the Tartars, enjoyed no tranquillity till the reign of a stranger of the name of *Caicobad*, who founded a new dynasty. He affected to be descended from the *Peischdadians*; but it is plain he was not of that

* Herbelot, p. 347 and 348.

race,

race, since he founded a new dynasty, whose stock took a different name. Here, Sir, you have a picture of the ancient history of the Persians. I will not pretend to say, that each fact in the narrative is incontestible; but the facts in general, the succession of kings, the list and detail of wars, evince a certain foundation of truth *. If there is, at the same time, a considerable mixture of fable, it arises from the connexion that subsists between the memory and the imagination; while the one relates, the other creates and adds. This is your fault, or at least that of the poets, your predecessors. You have succeeded to Virgil, Homer: Homer replaced Orpheus; Orpheus had heard all the poets of the east, whose glory time has obliterated; they were the guardians of tradition; but, at the same time, they altered it for the sake of ornament, as well as to render it more easily retained in the memory. And without those ornaments what should we have known? Among mankind, more captivated by sense than curiosity, more prone to pleasure than to instruction, nothing pleases generally, and long, but by the charm of style; dry truth, by becoming tiresome and stale, would have been lost to posterity. You have mixed and assimilated every thing, in order to

* The chronology is sufficiently consistent to warrant this assertion. These Peishdadians reigned 2451 years 7 months. *M. Anquetil, Zend-Avesta*, tom. ii. p. 417.

give the whole an additional interest. You have endowed Nature with a mind and a will; her causes become passions, her motions are actuated by motives; each of her phenomena is a living being like ourselves, perceives like us, and interests our feelings by those analogies. Man, who is every where the same, will never forget the principles couched under those emblems, until he forget himself. On the other hand, you have infused Nature and all her power, into the page of history, where truth admits only men and human means: but those men are of great character, and with those means they have performed mighty things! Pride, the fear of committing themselves, might have deterred them from their pursuits; you have summoned to their aid geniuses who preside over rivers, winds, storms; geniuses, in amity with man, who master and league with the elements, in order to favour their enterprizes. You have contrived that fortune, which is inconstant, should console incapacity: force is the result of majestic stature; courage is the inspiration of heaven; activity of genius; every where present, celerity of operations cease to astonish us when your hero is conveyed by a bird. Were I to be astonished at all, it should be that those heroes, with such auxiliaries, have done so little. I congratulate myself upon the triumph of humanity, in times when it has been highly favoured:

voured: I do homage to that superiority of talents, which has the art of placing out of my species what in reality is but its perfection; nothing can be more dextrous or ingenious, considered as the means of perpetuating glory in spite of envy, and of engaging the multitude to take pleasure in conversing with great men.

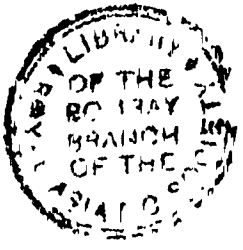
If truth, moral as well as physical, are duly respected in the conduct of your fables; if, in Cupid bearing his torch and arrows, and above all, with his bandage over his eyes, the frigid old man recognizes the passion of his youth; if, in Narcissus enamoured of his shadow, he discerns his juvenile vanity; if, at the moment when we take leave of Bacchus and Love, we discover *Time, which shakes us by the hand** ; in the same manner truth is adorned, but by no means lost, in historical poetry. A petty prince carries off a young woman, or certain little coalesced kings sack a town; a great poet converts those events into a memorable history; another great poet has sung the praises of a prince adored by his country: our ancient writers of romance, who had some affinity with the poet, have celebrated the exploits of the days of Charlemagne. The ancient poets, historians, and novellists of Persia, whom Herbelot has pillaged in order to compose his oriental library, are equally entitled to credit with those of

* M. De Voltaire, tom. ii. p. 129.

Europe.

Europe. The facts have all had an existence; all that brilliant colouring has been laid upon a true ground. The first verses were composed with no other view than to preserve tradition, and to bestow upon it a living form; the imagination was at pains to garnish it with flowers: you have created such a variety of those flowers, that you will assist me in distinguishing their species; that which shall then remain simple and undisguised, will constitute the history of truth, and be worthy of philosophy's regards.

I am, with respect, &c.



SEVENTEENTH LETTER TO M. DE VOLTAIRE.

[Of the Fées and Peris.]

Paris, 31st March, 1778.

THE Fées, as you see, Sir, had their origin in Asia. The fairy race, in general, is the offspring of the lively and brilliant imagination of eastern nations. Schadukian, otherwise called Ginnistan, is the native country of those fantastic beings: the capital city was of diamonds *. You must not be surprized at this: those beings had the whole powers of Nature at their disposal: the elements obeyed them: they had the power to create, which they employed for domestic magnificence, or for the purpose of gratifying the wishes of men, who, above all things, demand riches. And though the diamonds and precious marbles should have been nothing more than the result of enchantment; though all this magnificence should be but an illusion; it would be quite enough for our frail species: what it possesses torments it, what it thinks it possesses makes it happy. Illusion sits in the vestibule

* Herbelot, p. 765.

of

of life; and when age and truth arrive, illusion vanishes, and happiness and youth depart together. Those beneficent beings who could confer riches, who could give aid and protection, have been cherished in the mind of man; because he feels his weakness, because he seeks the assistance of Nature against the dangers that surround him, and frequently against himself. No man ever saw those Fées, or received their succour, though history is full of the acts of their beneficence: it was usual to quote instances of heroes, dead, it is true, of a long time, whom they had loaded with riches and glory. This was sufficient for the generation of that day, fond as it was of fables. The happiness that disappointed us yesterday, may make us happy to-morrow. He who has hope, has every thing.

It is a very singular idea, Sir, that of spirits which hover around us, which live in the elements, in a manner invisible to us, and reside in the departments of Nature, in order to animate her productions. As in this troublesome life we feel much want of a better one, we feel also, by our weakness and dependence, that Nature is moved by something more powerful and perfect than ourselves. This inward sentiment directed the imagination, which, with different degrees of rudeness or delicacy, gave birth to different beings, to different species of spirits, which we ought to distinguish. As soon as man came to dis-

discover the immortal substance which ennobles his existence, he exempted it from destruction; he with justice invested it with immortality. Matter may circulate for ever: it is only the cover which envelopes the souls of men: it alone is susceptible of dissolution. We hold of the earth: we dread the moment when we must take leave of it; and, judging from our present feelings, we have no doubt that souls would be very glad to return to it again. The souls which hover about the places dear to their mortal existence, make one of those species of spirits. The *Lutinæ*, the *Lemures*, the *Larvæ*, of the Romans, were the souls of the wicked: they were still actuated by the desire of mischief, and they attended us only to injure and molest us. Hence came sacrifices and expiations, which were supposed to conciliate and dismiss them. The souls of the good were named *Lares:* every one courted their return, and were anxious to assign them the places in which they had been happy, and what is more, in which they had produced the happiness of others. They were believed to seat themselves round the domestic hearth: it was there that, in the winter evenings, a father become white with age, instructed in their presence his young family. The Lares were the protection and common defence: they were never to be lost sight of, without necessity; and it was an indispensible duty to invoke their return. The same prin-

principle which induced the Atlantides to write the names of their ancestors in the skies, placed them here in the paternal mansion, that it might be still more the object of affection. In China, the tablets on which those names are inscribed, and exhibited as objects of filial veneration, have the same origin; so deeply is a respect for age and virtue engraven in the human heart! But, Sir, this notion of the return of spirits separated from the body, which, from its object, I should venture to call a moral superstition, implies a belief of the soul's immortality. Among a people unassisted by revelation, it could only arise along with this belief, and when men, less enslaved by the grosser appetites, acknowledged its supremacy and genuine excellence. This superstition, then, must have taken its rise in enlightened times: it has been lasting, because it is analogous to our natural sensibility. The protecting tutelary geniuses of empires and individuals, were of a different description. I there perceive the public spirit, and the character of particular men; circumstances which constitute the happiness of empires, and the wisdom of life. The genius of the Roman people was the influence of an invincible pride, and of a warlike virtue. The genius of Socrates was the light of his own mind. *Separate thyself from Octavius*, was a saying addressed to Marc Antony: *thy genius is overawed by his.* When leaders enter the lists, the contest is decided by

by the respective force of character: the weak must yield to the strong. Thus, the genius meant nothing but this ascendant; a certain vigour of mind and thought, which seems frequently to govern Fortune itself. But those metaphysical expressions are above the comprehension of the vulgar: they take up more readily with beings of their own creation. Of these, they imagined some strong and some weak, which combated in our favour. Fortune was various, but its reverses did not humiliate. A man had nothing to regret, except that he should have had so weak a genius. Observe, Sir, how we always retain a certain feature of truth in the midst of our errors. Genius, in fact, is the great and sole agent on earth: the only difference between one man and another, is that of genius.

The inferior Pagan deities, are in the same manner the result of knowledge, mixed with darkness and error. The nymphs of woods and fountains, the divinities of rivers, and of the sea, with those of the winds, merely represented the phenomena of Nature. This, as we observed above, is nothing but the doctrine of second causes, taught by the philosopher, and personified by the vulgar: it is the remains of a physical system, misapprehended and misconceived by narrow capacities. The chain of Plato is nothing else than an idea of those beings, but restored in his sublime conception, raised to the height

height of the philosopher's genius, which, overleaping the distance observable between God and man, wished to fill up the interval by a scale of intermediate beings. You see what this process implies. Before the reinstatement of that philosophical idea, before Plato, there must have existed a state of ignorance, in which men disfigured a beautiful system invented by their predecessors, but hidden behind that darkness which set in with the epoch of barbarism. This clew leads us, for the origin of those ideas, to a period of light and information.

The Fées are different, Sir, from all that: they neither mean an ascendant of character which contends against fortune, nor that residue of our mortal existence hovering around us, endowed with our affections, and still actuated by the regret we feel at parting with life;—nor those personified causes; those beings which are nothing but the motions of Nature, commissioned by us to make the rivers run, the trees vegetate, the winds blow, and the waves lift up their heads. The Fées are the daughters of Time, which loves to embellish and exaggerate the past. The Fées, as well as Geniuses, are merely human beings, clothed in our form, suffering, waxing old, dying like ourselves. Those geniuses are not like yours, which is immortal, and will never grow old. They have only preserved, like you, the long life of the primitive ages. They are not subject to death in

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our modern romances: but we must take care that the immortality we have given them be not of our own contrivance. The Orientalists do not think in the same manner. Read the *Mille et un Jour* *, where their manners and opinions are painted by themselves. You will there see, that somebody announces to Cheherisrani, wife of the Emperor of China, the death of her father, the king of the Genius.s*. Herbelot will inform you expressly, that the Dives were not pure spirits: they had bodies, and were subject to mortality †. Here, then, is the most unequivocal mark of humanity. The Persians call dir-mardam a savage animal, which has the human figure ‖. It is the same with the fawn, the satyr of the ancients, and the orang-outang of modern times. Hence we may draw this conclusion, that the word Dive had been primitively the name of man: the idea annexed to this word became magnified by distance of time, and the obscurity of tradition; it changed its natural meaning when it passed into the language of the Persians. The great achievements of the Dives, the force with which they were endowed afterwards, raised them above the rank of men, and formed them into a distinct and separate species; just as the wisdom and ascendancy of old men have consecrated

* Mille et un Jour, tom. i. p. 10.

† Herbelot, p 831.

‖ Ibid. p. 298.

the word itself, and rendered it a title of superiority *. The Dives and Peris, according to the fabulous traditions of the Persians, reigned over the earth nine thousand years. When the earth was given to Adam and his children, they relegated those ancient and privileged creatures to the mountains of Caf. They had this advantage over a species which used to have so much ascendancy over theirs. Do you not perceive in all this, Sir, what must have been passing in those ancient times? Men, as they increased in population, mutually repelled each other: the strong drove the weak before them: some states rose into consequence, whilst others were annihilated. The life of Gian-ben-Gian is evidently that of a man: he built pyramids and executed military expeditions †. If he is said to have lived two thousand years, the reason is, that they consider his dynasty, or the duration of his race, as the prolongation of his life. The Dives reigned seven thousand years; were of great force; that is to say, a powerful people—wicked; that is to say, conquerors: they harassed and pursued the isolated tribes, which were destitute of union and defence. They had been used to live, no doubt, in a severe climate, which gives bodily vigour; and upon an uncultivated soil, where the want of labour renders industry unavoidable.

* The great are named *seigneurs*; old men, *seniores*.

† Supra, p. 146.

The

The tygers of the north pillaged the plains, and lodged their booty in the caverns of the mountains. The lambs of the south, fatigued with those desolating incursions, assembled: they owed the gentleness of their nature to a more fertile soil, and milder climate. Their society composed an empire, which was that of the Peris: an agricultural people are meek, hospitable, and beneficent. The Dives, however, existed always, and a state of habitual warfare came to be established between the two people. The Peris strengthened themselves against the common enemy, by forming an alliance with the ancient Persians, at the time their empire was founded by Caiumarath. Hence the reason why you see Huschenk, Feridoun, the conqueror of the Dives, proceed to the country of the Dives and Peris, to succour the latter against the former, and to give peace to the one, by repelling and restraining the other within the limits of their mountains. The Orientalists bear us witness, that not one nation alone, but that several nations have been destroyed. *What is become of the people of Gian, the son of Gian? Consider to what time has reduced them* The Dives and Peris, then, only lived in the memory of men, and were no where to be found but in romance. They account for the origin of the supernatural power they possessed, by informing you that they were giants. All the traditions on earth agree in making

those giants one of the first races of men. The circumstance of their extraordinary stature, is an indication that they possessed great strength, but still human: it proves that there existed no difference but that of a physical kind.

The mountains of Caf are described in fable: they are placed upon a stone: God shakes it as often as he chooses to make an earthquake. Whoever possesses a bit of this stone, has the power of working miracles: it consists of one single emerald, and the rays which it reflects produce the azure colour of the skies. It is, without doubt, the source of the mines of precious stones: from the chips of this pivot of the globe come all our riches. The mountains of Caf are of vast extent; insomuch, that all others are only their branches: it is there that the stars rise and set. It is a saying, *When the sun appeared upon the mountains of Caf*; and again, *from Caf even to Caf*, when they mean to say from one extremity of the world to the other. Before you arrive at it, you must pass a most extensive country of darkness, to which the sun never extends his rays. No man can find his way thither, unless he is under the guidance of some superior intelligence, of some Fée, or genius. That is likewise the place to which the Dives were exiled, when man was created by God, for the purpose of governing the earth*. Do you not perceive,

* Herbelot, p. 230, and 231.

Sir,

Sir, in those traditions, the history of one people that succeeds to another; the obscurity of time, which confounds every thing; and a national pride, which exaggerates the power of the vanquished, in order to enhance the merit of victory? Are not the wide intervening space, the dark country, which it is necessary to traverse before you get to those mountains, certain indications that they are situated at a great distance? I shall not pretend to tell you, that those dark regions denote particular climates in the north; for we must have stronger evidence, before we can admit so important a conclusion. But I ask, If the inhabitants of one uniform plain, enjoying an unbounded horizon, or at least, who were accustomed to see only detached eminences, could represent to themselves the earth surrounded by a girdle of mountains? Would they say, that the sun appeared upon their summits, and went down behind them? Would they measure the wide surface of the earth by a circle of mountains? I conceive that the expressions of language are highly important, both to history and philosophy. These expressions are descriptive of what men have continually before their eyes; I mean the manners and physical objects of the country. The above expressions convey to me the idea of a people who inhabited a mountainous country, a vast valley, overlooked and protected on all sides by ridges of lofty rocks. The sun rose and set only to their

tops; the world was circumscribed within their bounds; and the idea, that they must not presume to pass them, made them figure in their minds as the very limits of extension. We discern in this habitation the origin of men's respect for mountains, and of the religious worship they wished to render in high places to the Supreme Being. You will recollect, Sir, the veneration of the Chinese, as well as Indians, for mountains, and the pilgrimages which these last undertook from a principle of devotion. This large valley appears to me to have furnished the races of the Chinese, Indians, and Persians.

This I believe the more readily, that I observe the Persians entertained an affection for the Peris. The Peris were good; they were powerful, but only for the purposes of beneficence. I see an alliance and reciprocal good offices subsisting between them and the Persians. This fact is decisive, at a time when different people were isolated from one another: they are evidently colonies which send succours to the mother country. Observe in what manner the Persians exaggerate the power of the Dives, who, however, were conquered by the Peris; observe also, how happy the earth was, under the dominion of these Fées! Have they not placed their reign at the head of the Persian history? The nations of antiquity either knew nothing of, or mutually despised, each other. Men never discover that love

love and concern for any but the authors of their race *. The country of the Fées is likewise named Schadukian, a word which signifies either *pleasure* or *desire* †. These words serve to recall all the ideas of the golden age. Pleasure means the happiness they enjoyed with their fathers, in that illusive period of life when every thing is pleasure: desire denotes the regret they felt for having left it. The capital was named the city of Diamonds, which imports that it belonged to a rich country. Ah! in those primitive times, was it not so? Nay, man cannot be said to have ever been truly rich since. He is only rich when he has nothing more to desire: and, in those days, was there any thing he did not possess? When Scripture paints to us the riches of the Patriarchs, we form to ourselves an idea of their mighty opulence; but that opulence is relative to the simplicity of their manners. Were any one to give us their riches, luxury would soon devour their flocks, and we should be poor with their inheritance. The case is by no means the same, when a people compare their present with their condition in ancient times: the real history and detail of it are gone. They will say, we are in want, we are poor:—our forefathers wanted nothing: they were rich. But why were

* According to M. Danville, Persia, in Scripture, is named *Paras*. Geog. Anc. p. 267.

† Herbelot, p. 765.

they rich? Of this they can know nothing; since all the particulars are forgotten. The imagination is at hand, to supply the defect: it enriches those simple men with the objects of our present desires. Men, as they descended into the kingdom of Golconda, the country of mines, of precious stones, there found a new species of riches: they attributed to the place of their origin mines still more productive; because the country which is the object of our regret, is always superior to that which we possess. We have only to imagine, what a people who love the marvellous, add to the truth in their recitals, and suppose, at the same time, a long descent, a great lapse of time, which darkens past events, which makes a description of them depend upon the imagination; and we shall be satisfied that they would easily get, at last, to a city of diamonds. Those descriptions and fables remind me of the colouring of the golden age. We have already observed, that those ideas are entailed by one generation upon another: far from perishing, they go on gradually increasing: the marvellous contains within itself a principle of re-production. But you will ask me, Sir, how, and for what reason, were the founders of the Persian race transformed into Peris? In what manner did man pass from the idea of beings similar to himself, to that of beings powerful, in respect of good and evil, who ceased to be creatures of the same species? Nothing appears

pears more natural and more easily conceived, than a metamorphosis of this sort. As a naturalist, you know that physical light takes its departure from a centre, and is diminished by distance: the light of the mind is weakened in the same manner. Suppose colonies are sent to a distance; these colonies will be less enlightened than the mother country; it is there that the principle of motion resides, there that the heart beats, and there that the heat of blood is greater than that of the same blood forced to the extremities. Nascent colonies have something else to do than to devote themselves to the pursuits of knowledge: their first business is to examine the country, to clear the land, to build houses and cities, and to provide for all the wants of the society. In those ancient times, when knowledge was loose, and unascertained by printing; when men wrote upon stone, and facts of importance only, all besides was committed to memory: you know how much, in that case, every thing would be liable to alteration. In respect of knowledge, men begin to lose, the moment they cease to acquire. *The mind is a fire which you must be continually feeding, and which goes out if it does not increase* *. Consider, besides the effect of distance, which renders intercourse difficult, revolutions which destroy the parent stock of those colonies, and you will agree, Sir, that they must continue to

* M. De Voltaire, tom. ii. p. 129.

dege-

degenerate, till such time as they have acquired consistency enough to enable them to begin a new course of improvement. But, at the same time that the light diminishes, and that certain dark shades mix along with it, the memory of the past is magnified through this dusky medium; obscurity is the native region of chimeras. It is because there our vision is imperfect, that we see in it any thing we please. You know, Sir, all that truth and flattery have detailed of the glorious age of Louis XIV. Let us figure to ourselves a French colony, settled at this day in some remote country, and without communication, mixing with the native inhabitants, relating to them the wonders of that celebrated reign, the magnificence of Versailles, smooth seas, water ascending the mountains to furnish the means of sailing in boats; the king once astonishing, overawing the nations of Europe by the ascendancy of his character; if they should add, that in Europe there exists a people who see the ocean over head, and who have the power of setting bounds to the waves of the sea; a sovereign who makes the rocks walk upon the waters, to serve as steps to the statue of a great man: if this detail should pass from mouth to mouth, and from one generation to another, in no long period of time the Europeans would become a race of giants, and seem to be beings of a powerful and superior nature to man. Louis XIV. would be the monarch

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of the Genii; Catherine II. a Fée, who animates the north by the torch of her genius, which burns in the midst of the ice. I imagine, then, that they placed a city of diamonds in the country of the Fées, for the same reason that the poets saw rivulets running with milk and honey in the golden age, an appearance no less extraordinary. I conceive that the men of the present age, were they actually to perform things of great importance, might become Genii and Fées, when the race may have degenerated, and when ages of imbecillity may have ensued. In comparing the present with past races of men, in admitting the superiority of the latter, human weakness was confounded, pride perhaps murmured; and upon an estimate of present excellence, according to which we always judge of Nature, they placed beyond her every thing that seemed to them to exceed her powers. Conceive then, Sir, had the ages of the Peris been favoured with their Voltaire, what the Orientalists might have thought of him. Would they have believed that one man could possibly unite in himself such a variety of different talents? They would have treated you as they treated Hercules; they would have decomposed you, in order to bring you within the limits of probability: they would have borrowed from your genius the idea of a superior intelligence, and they would have had reason.

Let

Let us take the trouble to consult Nature, and we shall find there the source and model of every human institution. Man creates nothing; he was created himself; he has not an idea which is not derived from the objects of sense. His memory preserves their images; his imagination transposes, resolves some of them into their component parts, for the purpose of mixing and diversifying these ingredients: this combination may be regarded as a species of new creation. Pictures and compositions are our work, but the elements belong to Nature; they are buildings to which she furnishes the materials. Centaurs, human figures with dogs' heads, or the feet of animals, are examples of these transpositions of parts and compositions of the imagination. The Larvæ and Lares were souls which preserved a spiritual life after the separation of the two substances: the tutelary geniuses meant good conduct, and the influence of wisdom and courage; secondary deities were the powers of Nature displayed in particular phenomena; the Dives, the Peris, the Fées, who were different from all these, were races of men; but races removed to a great distance of time; races seen through a veil, and whose idea, long kept alive in the memory, was exaggerated by a sentiment either of fear or of love. You see, Sir, how a man becomes rich, how the human mind profits by its travels. I have been furnished with sufficient documents

ments to enable me to exceed my promise, and to give you even more than you asked; you desired an example of a lost people, and I shew you four: the Atlantides, and a neighbouring people mentioned by Plato, the Dives, and the Peris, whose memory is faithfully preserved among the Persians. Have you no fear that so much riches should be an incumbrance to us; that to make a choice should become difficult? You know that we must never cease to hoard up lore, without troubling ourselves about the use of it; we must leave that to time, which will afterwards point it out to us. We mean to persevere in our researches; perhaps we may still learn something; hitherto our efforts to discover the country of the Atlantides have been without effect; let us not lose courage, it is possible we may light upon that of the Fées. The country of the Fées pleased me mightily in my younger years; these Genii, who made themselves serviceable to the passions, are naturally favourites of youth; we never have what we want in the moment we desire it; the illusion vanishes the instant we conceive ourselves ready to seize it! But the Fées and Genii have returned into the order of natural beings; they are nothing but mere men. Now that we have the light of reason to direct us, we inquire with more wise and sober views: we are now to take

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the route of the mountains, and perhaps we shall arrive at the country of the Fées, the seat of the golden age of the first of our race.

I am, with respect, &c.

EIGHTEENTH

EIGHTEENTH LETTER TO M. DE VOLTAIRE.

[The origin of the Persians beyond the ramparts of Asia.]

Paris, 23 April, 1778.

SIR,—The mountains where the Peris inhabited, and beyond which the Dives were sent into exile, are those of Caf and Damavend. Damavend, in former times, was a city in the province of Adherbigian, or in ancient Media *; it is about the thirty-seventh degree of latitude, situated at the foot of a chain of mountains which stretches along and unites with Caucasus: the mountains of Caf are the very same with Caucasus †. This mountain, so famous in antiquity, extends from the Black, the length of the Caspian Sea, then descending towards the south, and running beyond the Caspian, where it describes a curve, under the name of Imaus ‖, it traverses

* Herbelot, p. 283.

† Ibid. p. 231.

‖ I shall always give the name of Caucasus to this chain of mountains, which traverses Asia.

Asia

Asia in its breadth, and stretches all the way to China. This chain makes a natural division of Asia, it separates the northern from the southern climates, which are more highly favoured by the sun. It serves at present as the boundary of Tartary: in ancient times it divided Scythia into two parts, known by the names of Scythia beyond, and Scythia on this side of the mountains *. The Scythians then dwelt beyond Imaus and Caucasus, as the Dives did beyond the mountains of Caf The Scythians, and the Tartars who succeeded them, have at all times been conquerors and destroyers, frequently lived at the expence of those who cultivated the soil and amassed its riches, as the Dives are represented to have been always of wicked dispositions, dreaded by their irruptions and wars: the Dives wan'ed to cross the mountains; they were driven back, and confined to that prison which Nature had prepared for them.

Those mountains present glens and defiles, where defence is easy above all, when art avails itself of local situation, and shuts up such passages as are already narrow and confined. In that part of Caucasus which extends from the Caspian to the Black Sea, several of those defiles, the only ones no doubt that were practicable, were secured by gates, known by the name of the Caspian gates, the gates of Al-

* M. Danville, Geog. Anc. tom. ii. p. 317.

bania,

hania, and, in general, the gates of Caucasus *. Those precautions intimate a means of defence, rendered necessary by repeated incursions; in short, a state of warfare established between the north and the south of Asia. The most famous of those gates are above Derbend, towards the forty-fifth degree of latitude; tradition says, that they were constructed by Alexander the Great. But the Grecian Alexander, fool enough to pursue fruitless conquests in Asia, with an untimely death, did not meet with so favourable a reception from the Scythians as could induce him to undertake the construction of those barriers. It would be necessary to subdue the people, before he thought of the means of their defence: this report has its sole foundation in an ambiguity of name. The more southern Asiatics, in all times of inoffensive manners, among whom great exploits occur but seldom, and conquerors are viewed as prodigies, astonished at the valour of the Greeks, and the rapidity of Alexander's conquests, little solicitous about his real name, of which perhaps they knew nothing, gave him the name of Dhoul-carnein, that of an ancient conqueror whom they still remembered, probably owing to the deep impression his ravages in Asia had left in their minds; for we are warranted to say, that the name of Alexander was engraven by terror, and is never pronounced among

* M. Danville, Geog. Anc. tom. ii. p. 119 and 123.

those quiet and harmless people, without an execration of his memory.

Those gates, therefore, are of a very ancient date, since, as you will recollect, Sir, according to the Orientalists, this Dhoulcarnein was Giamschid, or his son Feridoun. You recollect also, that Giamschid built the city of Persepolis, that he made his entrance into it, that he chose for the beginning of the year the day of the vernal equinox, when the sun passes into our hemisphere*. These circumstances and attentions suggest a sort of consecration to the sun. We observed, that Giamschid seems to have arrived a stranger in Persia†; and here we find the proof of it. If he fortified the defiles towards Derbend, it happened either at the time when he lived there, or, at the moment when quitting that country to settle at Persepolis, he wished to secure the frontiers of his empire. But it may be questioned whether Giamschid descended from Media and Caucasus into Persia, or whether he did not proceed from the centre of his kingdom, and extend his conquests to the foot of Caucasus, which became a natural boundary: this is a point which it will be our business to examine.

In travelling, each people carry with them the provisions of their own production; the Chinese

* Hist. de l'astronomie Ancienne, p. 130.

† Second Letter to M. De Voltaire.

arrives

arrives with tea, the Arab with coffee, the Malays with spiceries. As we are in some degree the creatures of climate, men announce also by their habits, the country of which they are natives. If you should happen, Sir, to be in one of those trading sea-ports, where we meet with people collected from all nations, and where you should see two men, one of whom was dressed in furs, and the other carried a parasol over his head, would you not infer that the first was from a climate where the cold forces the natives to strip the wild animals of their skins for the sake of cloathing, whilst the other came from a country where men were obliged to defend themselves against the sun; the one and the other preserving their respective habits in a temperate climate, where those precautions are no longer necessary? This conclusion is just and natural; and in considering in this manner, the usages and institutions of different nations, we more easily discern their peculiar genius. If a man should present himself carrying fire about with him, you would presume that this man was born in a land frequently chilled with frost; and if he should prostrate himself before his coal fire, if he should make his prayers to it, you would say, that he gives it his grateful thanks, or invokes it as a being that is useful to him. Yet, Sir, you have seen in Persia the Magi surround the altar whereon the sacred fire receives adoration; you are

no stranger to the temples of Rome, where this sacred element was preserved and worshipped under the name of the Goddess Vesta. These temples were erected in imitation of the Piræ * of Persia. This worship was brought from Asia into Italy by Æneas †, or by the Phrygians, who came to settle in it. The adoration of fire, and the care of preserving it, were then characteristics of the worship of the Magi. Its preservation was not intrusted to the priests alone, it was the duty of each individual to have fire in his house, or least in the entrance, and in that particular place, which, from the name of Vesta, has been called the vestibule ‖. You observe that Æneas, before he abandons his country, withdraws the sacred fire from his domestic hearth ¶, in order that, while he carried off his father, and conducted his son, he should leave nothing in those places of his affections which he should never see again. In ancient, as well as modern times, therefore, fire has been a god of Asia. If ever fear made a god, here is one we are sure it did not make; for man never exacts of himself the preservation of a thing which he fears; nor does he carry about with him an object which he dreads, placing it upon a level with a father and a son.

* In the east, the pirre are the temples of the sun.

† Bannier, tom. ii. p. 365.

‖ Ovidii, Fasti, lib. vi.

¶ Æneidas, lib. ii.

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This worship appears to me, then, a worship of gratitude. Moreover, the fire serves only two essential purposes; that of dressing our victuals, and that of keeping us warm. Men, I have no doubt, ate a long time of raw flesh: cookery is nothing but a refinement. However much men may be given to gormandizing, I can scarcely believe that it leads to a sentiment of devotion: every thing that belongs to religion, appears to me of too venerable a description to be referred to such an origin: this sentiment, which exalts and refines our nature, takes its rise in a feeling of benefits. But the real benefit of the fire is the heat which it restores to us after we have lost it. But how should artificial heat be a benefit in Persia, where Nature bestows it in an excessive degree? Persia contains large provinces, almost uninhabitable from the want of water. Have you not observed, that there men go to sleep upon terraces? Poetry breathes nothing but the salutary shade of trees: pleasure sighs for the approach of night, which invites it by an attractive freshness. There, the sun is never seen to witness either the repast or the feast of love: joy and festivity wait his departure. The descriptions of magnificent and voluptuous apartments shew you halls lined with marble, and, in the centre, a bason garnished with spouts of water. This desire of humidity, under the shade of places shut up from the external air, and surrounded with marbles, which are

always cold, is expressive of an excess of heat. That I may not shiver at this recital, I must recall the fervors of a mid-day sun in some rare days of our summer; and when I figure to myself a climate where such precautions are necessary, I have no conception of a festival like that of the Persians, who kindle, once a year, large fires during the night, round which they are used to feast and dance*. They shun the heat every day of their lives; and in this solemnity they seem to court it, in order to make merry. This is an ancient usage preserved in the country: it is the commemoration of a joy which no longer exists. If the discovery of fire had been made in Persia, I cannot think it ought to have excited much gratitude: wherever winter is unknown, fire must be of no use. Why should they deify, why burn incense to an object that is useless? It is in climates where the cold exercises a long reign, where winter dwells, accompanied with accumulations of perpetual ice, that the discovery of fire would be a blessing of Heaven, and a benefit to humanity. A man who felt the sources of life ready to freeze, would naturally conceive that life was restored to him. Cold is an enemy which Nature stirs up against him: fire, which meets it as an antagonist, and puts it to flight, could be no other than a protecting and beneficent divinity. You conceive, Sir, how much the

* Herbelot, p. 341.

very

very essence of fire was favourable to those ideas: the fire, so remarkable for a motion of extreme activity, and for the power it possesses of consuming and destroying all things; they would throw into it the trunks of trees, the dead spoils of the earth, and say to it, consume, and live, provided we live also. At the same time, fire presented to man, dejected by the absence of the sun, and living under the gloom of night, a most consoling light: it dispersed the shades of darkness during a certain part of the year, cheared his spirits, and chaced fear, and all those spectres which flutter in the dark: it thus warmed his frozen limbs, animated and enlivened his imagination, become languid and gloomy like the earth itself. Those services were well entitled to altars. But this fire, produced by the fall of lightning, or collected by accident from the stroke of a flint; fire obtained in the midst of ice—you can easily imagine how precious it must have appeared in the eye of the natives: they dreaded the idea of losing it, and of not being able to recover it again. Hence the usage of preserving it; a sacred care, intrusted to the priests and to virgins, immaculate as itself. They enacted punishments of the greatest severity, in case of negligence. And, without this origin, how great would have been the absurdity of those penal laws! Men never establish usages, much less laws, without a reason How is it possible, that in a country such as

Persia, and Italy, where thunder is frequent, where the sun, which burns up every thing, seems constantly at hand to provide them in fire, the natives should have had such fear of losing it, as to institute colleges of Magi, and vestals, for its preservation? I confess to you, Sir, that the origin of the worship of fire in the north, as I have stated it, in climates of frost and darkness, appears to me alone probable; and, indeed, if I might venture to say it, alone natural. I apply here, and with still greater force of reason, all that I observed to you before, upon the rise of the worship of the sun. One cannot miss to feel in Syria, that the sun there is necessary; and though this conviction does not appear to me sufficient to lead men to adoration, at least it would be enough to justify the practice, after it had been introduced. But here the evidence is still more clear and decisive. In Persia, fire is not only not necessary; it is even superfluous: a Persian, far from adoring it, ought to fly from it. Will you have a proof of a different kind? We shall find it in the name itself of fire. The Greek word is *pyr*: we distinguish it in an ancient Egyptian word, *pyramis*, which signified pyramid*; but the word *pyr* is Phrygian, as Plato himself informs us†. Now, in the Edda of the Swedes, in an ancient book of a country where it is difficult to dispense with fire, fire

* Pliny, lib. xxxvi. c. 8.

† Plato, *in Cratyl.*

is named *fyr*, *fur* *. Those terms are evidently the same; and with so much the more certainty, that the Greeks, as we are told, pronounced *pyr* as we pronounce *pur*. These two terms, *pyr* and *fyr*, have the same origin, and are derivatives from the same root, which had been communicated by one people to another. But I ask, where ought fire to have been first known and named, but in the climate where its discovery was of the greatest service? It was a people of the north, therefore, who imported fire and its name into Phrygia, whence it passed into Egypt and Greece. There fire was collected, preserved, adored, in climates where it was necessary and beneficial: its worship descended from them to more southern countries, as the water runs down from the mountains, where it settles and collects in a mass. As soon as men entered countries where fire became useless, the tradition was easy and natural, from the worship of fire to that of the sun. The great and universal fire, which is sufficient for its own preservation, seemed to merit a more solemn homage: the other came to be adored, in future, only as an emblem of the sun †.

Now, Sir, inasmuch as we recognized the inhabitant of the north by his furs, we shall have no difficulty

* Rudbeck, *de Atlantica*, tom. i. p. 805.

† The Laplanders worship the sun, and respect the fire as his image.—A voyage in Lapland, in the works of Reynard, tom. i. p. 186.

in

in believing that the man who carries fire about with him is his countryman. You may be sure he is a stranger, where fire itself is but rare. From the time that the Persians extended the boundaries of their empire to the foot of Caucasus, they ascended no more northwards; on the contrary, they proceeded towards the south. Giamschid quitted those mountains, and advanced into the plains of Persia, where he founded Persepolis*. I know not whether the new ideas I submit to you spread a sort of charm around me; but those conclusions seem to carry the fullest evidence to my mind: they appear to me more certain than tradition, or even history itself; for tradition is frequently corrupted; history is falsified; national vanity, and a thousand prejudices, are apt to pervert it! How often have not the variations of language, the equivocal names of nations, changes in geographical terms, given occasion to false conceptions! Here we attend solely to the wants of men, the inclinations, the affections, that correspond to them, and which can never change: we decide according to Nature and Reason, which are eternally and invariably the same.

Now that ancient history, obscure as it is, does [illegible] tribute certain facts, to strengthen the conviction which arises from this philosophical analysis. I shall now inform you, that the Pyræ first known

* Second Letter to M. De Voltaire.

were

were discovered in Adherbdigian, which is the most northern part of Media, and always upon mountains*. I desired you to remark, that Zoroaster, the restorer of this worship, who was also of a mountainous country, had inserted in his narrative, descriptions which bear the stamp of forty-nine degrees of latitude †, of a climate farther north than Caucasus. You observe, that Giamschid fortified this chain of mountains, or shut up the passage by gates. His residence was there, no doubt. One of his ancestors, Caiumarath, who was, as they pretend, the author of the worship of fire, undoubtedly lived there; in like manner. The theatre of all the wars carried on with the Dives, was near the mountains of Caf, which are no other than Caucasus ‖. You will see also by Oriental tradition, that *Surkage*, a giant and Dives, in the time of Adam, reigned over the mountains of Caf. He obeyed the command of God, and submitted to the father of men: he prohibited his subjects from molesting the children of Seth; and this last gave him, at his request, *Rucail*, his brother, and son of Adam, conversant in all the sciences, in order to instruct him, and govern his states. It was at this time, according to those same traditions, that Caiumarath began his reign. I have no inclination, as

* Herbelot, p. 105, and 528.
† Eighth Letter to M. De Voltaire.
‖ *Supra*, Sixteenth Letter.

you

you will easily believe, Sir, wholly to adopt those traditions: I can see that they are mixed with fable. I shall not determine whether they relate to the times that preceded, or followed the Deluge; but I observe, that they constantly speak of the mountains of Caf, or Caucasus. I see that they are the first rudiments of the Persian history: and since philosophical criticism obliges me to assert, that the worship of fire is a worship of the north, I am of opinion, that it passed those mountains in its descent towards the south; and I infer, that it is to the north of Caucasus that we ought to look for the origin of the Persians, who had the credit of introducing this worship. Here, Sir, you will no doubt recollect the story of Prometheus, who stole fire from heaven, and who, according to Hesiod, preserved it in the stem of a plant named ferula, whose core consumes slowly, and where the fire lurks and burns, without injury to the bark. Prometheus reigned in the vicinity of Caucasus: it is upon the same mountain that the eagle preys upon his vitals. The fable, or rather the Grecian tradition, coincides, then, with the traditions of the east. You will allow, that supported and directed as I am by such a variety of guides, it would not be easy to miss my way.

Rubruquis, Carpin, who travelled in Tartary in the reign of St. Louis, more than five hundred years ago, relate, that the people who inhabit beyond those moun-

mountains, have a kind of soothsayers, who purify by fire every thing that is unclean*. They adore the sun, fire, and the quarter of the south, as if it were a divinity †. In their assemblies, and in the ceremonies they observe in the election of a kan, they turn the face towards the south, and make their genuflections and prayers towards the same quarter. If you join to those facts, that of the Messagetæ, a Scythian nation who adored the sun, you will agree, that the fire and the sun were, perhaps are still, the objects of veneration and worship in those high regions of Asia, which in ancient times were the habitation of the Scythians, which are now that of the Tartars; and you will have the evidence of an additional probability in favour of my opinion—that the worship of fire, and of the sun, took its rise beyond Mount Caucasus.

The same traveller, Rubruquis, assures us, that the country at the bottom of Caucasus, and in the vicinity of Derbend, is delightful, both on account of its beauty and fertility. I conceive, that it attracted the notice of the ancestors of the Persians; I conceive also, that having traversed Caucasus, they shut the gates behind them, to prevent their enemies the Dives from following them, and, at the same time, that they might have the exclusive enjoyment of that

* Voyage of Rubruquis, p. 239.

† Carpin, p. 325, 326.

valuable

valuable acquisition. The Peris, who dwelt in the vallies of those mountains, continued in their friendship, they inhabited the mother country of the colony.

The bulwark of the Caspian gates was a means of defence: it serves to prove the existence of a state of warfare. I recollect that great wall built by the ancient monarchs of China, as a defence against the incursions of the north; a quarter of the world which has in all times been the cause of trouble and alarm: that vast work, which covers the whole north of China, shews to demonstration, how numerous and formidable their neighbours were on that side of the empire. The small province of Koauton, between China and Corea, is inclosed and fortified by a long palisade, which separates and defends it from its northern neighbours *. The Corea itself was covered to the northward by a strong wall, similar to that of China †. This wall was in part destroyed by an irruption of the Manchous Tartars; for precautions employed against force, afford but a temporary security: obstacles stimulate men to repeated exertions; and sooner or later the barriers are overthrown. But this is not all, Sir; I am told of another barrier, which once existed in Asia—it is called the rampart

* See a map of Asia in six sheets, by M. Danville.

† Hist. Gen. des Voyages, tom. xxiv. p. 304.

of

of Gog and Magog. However barbarous those names may seem, a harsh sound ought to occasion us no interruption; the existence, the situation of this new fortification, we must consider as highly interesting; and I propose to you, that we should make it our business to find it. The people of Gog and Magog, as we are informed, lived upon extremely high and steep mountains, which wholly excluded the use of carriages. Provisions, merchandize, were conveyed thither on men's backs, and upon goats, which are of a large size in that country; they employed seventeen days in ascending and descending, before they got to the place of their destination *.

Thus it is that those traditions of ancient nations carry us constantly back to the mountains: you perceive, from the circumstance of seventeen days employed first in ascending, then in descending, that this people dwelt in a valley, surrounded and defended by mountains almost inaccessible. We will take a guide for our journey. The Caliph Vathek, the nineteenth of the Abassidean race, in the year of the Hegira 228, or 842 of the Christian Æra, was curious to know whether this rampart, celebrated by so many Asiatic traditions, had in fact any real existence. He dispatched a learned man, named Salam, furnished with every thing necessary, and particularly with such books as contained a descrip-

tion of the object of his inquiry. Salam traversed Armenia, the north of Media, and came to the residence of a prince who reigned in Derbend, at the foot of Caucasus. This prince provided him in guides, who conducted him by a road of thirty-six days journey northward, where he found cities in ruins, which, he was told, were formerly the habitations of the people of Gog and Magog; the houses were mere heaps of rubbish, without an inhabitant. Derbend is nearly under the forty-second degree of latitude; although we were to estimate those journies at no more than four leagues each, the thirty-six would amount to one hundred and forty-four, which are nearly equal to six degrees, and would place the country of Magog about the forty-eighth degree of latitude. In short, Salam travelled twenty-seven days more; it is not said in what direction; there is reason to think it was towards the east, by turning above the Caspian sea, and he arrived at a place called in the Arabic, *Hafna*, by reason of its very strong and almost inaccessible position. It was there he saw the rampart, the object of his travels; he found it conformable in all respects to the descriptions contained in his books. He returned by a different route, and spent two months on his way to Samarcand; he then repaired to Samara, where the Caliph resided, and thus terminated his expedition,

which

which lasted in all two years and four months *. The whole of this detail has very much the air of truth. M. Danville, who has examined in an excellent memorial † the situation of this rampart, places it towards the forty-eighth degree of latitude. I infer two things from this description first, that those barriers were neither the Caspian gates, which are not in so high a latitude, nor the great Chinese wall, which stands much more towards the east; secondly, that they were not erected as a defence against the irruptions of the people of Gog and Magog, or at least of both these people together; but, on the contrary, that one of them, who dwelt on this side, employed them as a protection against the attempts of the northern tribes.

Thus, Sir, I see the wall and palisade of the Coréa, the great wall of China, the rampart of Gog, the Caspian gates of Caucasus, works of art, combined with precipitious mountains, with the fortifications of Nature, and forming altogether a vast circumvallation, which separates the south from the north of Asia. This barrier, situated at the height of forty degrees of latitude, where it covers China, at that of forty-two degrees towards Derbend, rises towards the north, between the Caspian and Black Seas, and in the interval lying between China and

* Herbelot, p. 470, 471.

† Mem. de l'Acad. des Inscript. tom. xxvi.

the Caspian. It stretches all the way near the forty-eighth degree, touching the distance from the Equator, as well as the residence of that people, the authors of institutions, whose existence I already suspected. This learned people certainly dwelt on this side of the mountains. On the other side prevailed ignorance and barbarism; in the interior the arts were introduced; science began to be cultivated, and those mountains were the line of demarcation, in like manner as the Cordeliers mountains in Peru separated the two seasons of Nature, and raise their snowy tops into the atmosphere, having summer or spring on one side, and winter on the other. The northern tribes, stopped short by those formidable barriers, roamed about the mountains, acquired strength, and increased in numbers for war and conquest; while the other, living under a milder sky, began to imbibe a taste for the arts of peace, cultivated the sciences, and sent off their superfluous population towards the south; where, if they found heat, they found also effeminacy, and lost in ease and abundance, that genius which had procured them a distinguished place in the history of mankind.

In our progress towards those mountains we ought not to confine our inquiries to the origin of the Persians alone; it is there also, though with less positive evidence, we may expect to find that of the Indians and Chinese. Does not the Sanscrit language shew

shew you, Sir, in the most satisfactory manner, that the Brahmans are strangers in India *? Has not M. Gentil told you that they came from the north †? Is not Benares a city distinguished for its learning as well as for its antiquity, at the same time one of the most northerly? It is in the vicinity of Thibet. Now M. Danville informs us, that one of the rivers which fall into the Ganges bears the name of Brahma; it takes its rise in the mountains of Thibet, where we find the residence of the Grand Lama, and runs as the light of science descended in ancient times. An account of great antiquity says, that in Asia, between Serica and India, lies a country inhabited by Brahmans: M. Danville will tell you that it is Thibet ‖. The natives eat every sort of flesh except that of the cow, which they worship as the primitive and respectable nurse of the human race ¶. The worship essential to Thibet is then the same with that which is essential to India. The Lamas are consequently Brahmans; and as they are found to ascend northward to the fiftieth degree of latitude, and even to Selinginskoi, the probability is, that the Brahmans took this route in their passage to India; a probability which is greatly corroborated by the pilgrimages which the Indians perform, from a sen-

* Third Letter to M. De Voltaire.

† M. De Gentil, Mem. de l'Acad des Sciences, année 1773.

‖ Geog. Anc. tom. ii. p. 349, 350.

¶ Hist. Gen. des Voyages, tom. xiv. p. 349.

timent of devotion to that part of Siberia *. Does not their veneration for Mount Pir-pen-sal, serve as an indication that in fact they had their origin among the mountains of Caucasus? You will see, Sir, by the history of modern astronomy, that the Chinese were acquainted with a city called Kant-gu, situated about the forty-sixth degree of latitude, where the natives conformed to the law of the Brahmans +. So much for the Indians. As to the Chinese, I have already stated to you a tradition of a princess named Nanca, who having set off from about the sixty-second degree of latitude, arrived in China, and there built the city of Nankin. Were this tradition to be deemed fabulous, still it would form a presumption in favour of the northern origin of the Chinese; but the Orientalists admit that the names Gog and Magog, Gin and Magin, Tchin and Matchin, are synonimous ‖. Tchin is an oriental word, from which we have formed the name China; and although the Chinese do not apply this name to their empire, it is nevertheless apparent, that this term, in the eastern nations, implies descent. But if you will take the trouble to consult the Chinese, you will find some remarkable traces of it. The province of Chan-si is the most northern

* Hist. Gen. des Voyages, tom. xxv. p. 370.
+ Hist. de l'Astr. Moderne, tom i. p. 275.
‖ Herbelot, p. 258.

of

of China; this province, which is only separated from Tartary by the great wall, is that which was first inhabited. The new settlers having found the climate both agreeable and healthy, fixed upon it as the place of their abode *. Those foreigners came from a country which has been inhabited since by the Manchous Tartars. A celebrated river, named Songari, runs through it; this river is broad, deep, and abounds in fish. Its source is in the mountains of Chang-pe-chang, which signifies the white mountain. The Chinese, who relate many fables concerning this mountain, boast of having descended from it, like the river Songari †. These traditions serve to throw light upon origins as remote in local situation as in distance of time. We observe, then, that the Indians, the Chinese, the Persians, set out from the line of circumvallation which we have traced in Asia; we observe, that under the direction of Grecian tradition, we have pursued the footsteps of the Atlantides, not only to the bottom of Caucasus, but even to that line: and at the same time that this chain forms a barrier, it is also a common origin of nations.

This long chain of ramparts marks to us then, Sir, a total separation of Asia into nations of the north and nations of the south; repeated attacks on

* Hist. des Voy. tom. xvii. p. 253.

† Ibid. tom. xxiv. p. 310.

the part of the one, persevering resistance and defence on the part of the other. It is a division which is traced in history as well as upon the map; we are told of Scythians on this and on that side of Imaus *. Authors take notice of the people of Gog and Magog; and they assure us, that the particle *ma* expresses position, and signifies on this side of the mountains. You see that the Peris, entrenched before those mountains, are incessantly employed in repelling their enemies the Dives, in their attempts to cross them. This division of Asia constitutes a striking characteristic, which we must not lose sight of. All the nations in the southern parts of the Asiatic continent are sprung and descended from those mountains; but they once traversed them: their primary origin is on the other side, and in the plains which their enemies themselves used to inhabit. Those rude northern tribes make an ancient branch of the human race, which served as a stock to the whole population of Asia. If the nations which have sprung from their loins bear them no sort of resemblance, the reason is, that they are in the situation of the descendants of a family that have become rich: polished and corrupted, they lose all likeness to their honest rustic progenitors. If we consider the more recent northern nations in respect of intellect and knowledge, they are the dregs of

* M. Danville, Geog. Anc. tom. ii.

the

the human race, the sediment of some refined substance; but if we regard them in respect of physical force, this is a quality inherent in their character; this they never lose; they seem born to make themselves masters of the world. The thirst of conquest, as well as the power of gratifying it, make a part of their nature; they have a consciousness of this power in their most inactive moments, in the same manner as I am conscious when at rest, of the faculty I possess to put myself in motion. Those restless, wandering Tartars, occupying a vast extent of territory, with a thin population, transporting over the deserts their flocks and their tents, have a supercilious pride, equalled only by their wretchedness; they cherish the desire, as well as the hope, of one day subjugating the world *. When certain monks were sent to them by St. Louis, for the purpose of their conversion, those shepherds required that this monarch, great and distant as he was from their borders, should pay them tribute; and they replied by menaces to their pious exhortations. Endowed with this turbulent and audacious character, we can well suppose, and history bears ample testimony to the fact, that their irruptions were frequent. They passed the mountains on many occasions, and forced the lines of Nature and art; the conquests and devastations of Gangiskan and Tamer-

* Carpin, Voyage en Tartarie, p. 374 and 380.

lane, are merely repetitions and fresh examples of the same thing. The history of Persia has already informed you of the incursion of Afrasiab; we shall meet with others as we proceed. But those modern Tartars, whom you term tigers of the north, under the conduct of their barbarous chiefs, are no other than young swarms, in the footsteps of the former; sprouts issuing from an old and vigorous stock, whose first branches the pruning-hook of time has lopt off. Those tigers cut the throats of the lambs of the south, who were, however, of the same breed; climate converted them into lambs, to render them a more easy prey to the enemy. In this part of the world, as in the fable of Saturn, the fathers devour their children; and, as in the history of mankind, brothers plunder their brothers. Territory, riches, are the causes of war; envy spoils enjoyment: we lose by force what we acquired by the same title. The same motive which induced the first human swarm to pass those mountains, tempted a second to follow in their steps; it was the want of subsistence, and the attractions of a beautiful sky: probably it required but a few generations to produce the second swarm. The first thought of self-defence, and fortified themselves with ramparts; the pretensions and attacks of the invaders were repelled, and the right of possession established: but they gained strength on one side, whilst effeminacy crept upon them

them on the other. The swarms who called for new habitations, multiplied with succeeding generations; efforts were redoubled, and became more formidable, at the same time that the means of defence continued the same, or perhaps became weaker. Those exertions accumulated against the barriers of the mountains, as waters rise against an embankment, and finish by levelling it with the ground. The world, moral and physical, observe the same process: we impel each other like the waves of the sea, and we follow in succession one to the other. You will, therefore, be no longer surprized that the enervated nations of the south, so often conquered, pillaged, massacred by the Tartars, are, nevertheless, descended from the same country, perhaps from the same stock, with those banditti: the former were once banditti, as well as the latter.

You see, Sir, that we must ascend, whether in respect to time or place, into the highest antiquity, and particularly into the north of Asia, in order to find the first instances of those inundations, and the countries whence those torrents took their descent. I propose to you, that we should pass Caucasus, Imaus, and that vast chain of mountains, which separate known nations, the Chaldeans, the Persians, the Indians, the Chinese, from the country where they had their origin. I remember to have boasted to you of this origin; to have told you, that it was the object

ject of regret, and that it had given rise to the fable of the golden age: I promise you the country of the Fées, and I shew you places of rude and savage aspect. I feel that those mountains will give you a dislike to it: not that you will be disconcerted with their summits white with snow, and lost among the clouds, with their sides scooped into precipices, where grow their ancient pines. It is there that Nature presents herself in a grand and imposing attitude! It is there she exhibits pictures worthy of a painter like you! An inhabitant as you are of Mount Jura, you have acquired a dread of Caucasus. I entreat you will indulge me in one reflection. The appearance even of the objects of Nature, depends upon the complexion of our ideas: the imagination moulds and transforms them at pleasure. If I am melancholy, the places around me, Nature herself, are melancholy like me: young, her verdure and energies are the circumstances which strike me most; old, I can see nothing but her decay. It is not the best way of inhancing the beauties of Caucasus, to conduct you thither in the hope that there you are to find the golden age. The torrents which have ploughed up its cavities, are anything but rivulets of milk and honey: ancient and dismal pines have no resemblance to that fresh foliage, under the shade of which youth used to sport in innocence. I am, Sir, nothing is more true, than that men regret the place of their birth: the imagination easily

easily finds it embellishments; and the more so, that it has enough of leisure for the business in the course of a long absence; and when we re-visit it, after the lapse of this long period, our friends are no more, the inhabitants are changed, and time has made a change in ourselves: in short, the place has lost its real charm—that of youth, which is gone from us for ever. I should not be astonished, were we to find the golden age in these same mountains. Do not your neighbours the Swiss, the greatest part of whom inhabit mountains, and live upon the milk of their flocks, like the Patriarchs, shew you that man may live happy in that situation, and preserve in it an image of the ages of justice and innocence? At that height upon the globe, men are raised above gross and pestilential vapours, and their manners are pure, like the air which they breathe. I conceive, that those mountains guard and render happiness compact; I conceive, that they might very naturally occasion a sentiment of regret. However, if you prefer smiling plains, we shall have a prospect, after those mountains, of an immense country: it contains very fertile and agreeable cantons, which might well deserve to be remembered: there, perhaps, we may find the cradle which the natives have adorned with such a variety of fables. We go on feeling our way in the regions of antiquity: we pursue a path faintly impressed; a path where so many vestiges have been obli-

obliterated. I can neither divine nor tell you every thing as we proceed; it is enough for me, if the thread which conducts us does not break. I have now led you by a chain of facts to the very foot of Caucasus. We are about to enter Tartary; and I shall be consoled for the loss of the authentic details of history, provided I can but seize the principal features; point out to you the route which men pursued; restore to you the lost people you call for; and thus raise from the grave, truths worthy of your genius.

I am, with respect, &c.

NINETEENTH LETTER TO M. DE VOLTAIRE.

[Considerations on the local situation and population of Tartary.]

Paris, 9th April, 1778.

By conducting you to the top of those mountains, Sir, I have led you to the highest land of our globe, or at least of Asia: I place you high in respect of local situation, as Nature has placed you in respect of genius. But the elevation to which we have ascended, does not consist in the eminences alone: the plains which are at our feet, are the broad summits of other mountains; summits which, in days of old, supported empires. We have no word to express those vast tracts of land raised above other lands, like our small hills upon our narrow plains. Permit me to design those lands by the word *plateaux*, or flats. Common language supplies terms upon which use confers a certain dignity: words become generalized, and above all, ennobled, by the ideas annexed to them. You perceive from the height where you now are, that Asia inclines before you: it descends towards the Frozen Ocean in plains, disposed in the

manner

manner of steps or gradations, by flats which succeed to each other, of different elevations, and which are frequently bordered by a circle of very high mountains. You are at the very source of fertility: it is produced by the waters which collect around us. Here is the grand reservoir of the largest quarter of the globe. Look towards the south—you see the course of the Indies, which still remembers to have been crossed by Alexander; the Ganges, in which the Indians perform their ablutions:—upon the right, the Ghoango, where the Yellow River of China proceeds towards the sea of Japan: but if you turn your eye towards the north, where my steps conduct you, you will see the Oby, accompanied by the Irtiz, the Jenisea, and the Lena, in their descent to the Frozen Ocean. All those sources, all the good things they are formed to bestow, are at your feet. You are, at the same time, upon the boundaries of heat and cold. It is not distance from the Equator which alone chills the atmosphere; it is the height at which we are; it is, above all, exposition.* Every thing before you declines towards the north, and is penetrated by frozen winds, which extend, without interruption, all the way to the mountains; but there they are repelled, as happened sometimes to the people; and on that vast ridge, the plains which fall away towards the south, receive only their kindly influences. This wide region, the place whence so

many

many rivers take their departure, is also planted with high mountains: they serve to inclose immense vallies, where men, in the enjoyment of peace, sheltered from the hostilities of the wind and the conqueror, were at liberty to form settlements, and lay the foundation of empires. You see, Sir, on your left, and eastward, the first of those vallies, or immense flats, covered on the north by the mountains of Altai, on the west by a chain *, which proceeds to unite with the mountains of Thibet: another chain runs east †, and diverges in branches, which close in the flat on the side of China: it is bounded towards the south by the mountains of Thibet. This flat has an extent of twenty-two or twenty-three degrees of latitude; that is to say, of from five to six hundred leagues, and it may have three or four hundred in its greatest breadth. As you advance to the centre of Asia, you discover at the bottom of the rampart of Gog and Magog, a second flat, equally defended and circumscribed by mountainous ridges. It is situated, like France, about the forty-ninth degree of latitude: it has nearly the same extent of surface, and perhaps, like it too, has had a considerable influence upon the culti-

* It is named *Mouzart*. See a Memorial, read in the Academy of St. Petersbourg, in the presence of the King of Sweden, the 15th of June, 1777, by M. Pallas on the formation of mountains, p. 17.

† It is named *Thangan*, ibid.

vation

vation of the sciences. As you go westward, you find the mountains of Oural, which set off from the Frozen Ocean, precisely at the spot where the Oby throws in its waters. That chain of mountains ascends towards the south, forming the line of boundary between Europe and Asia: it runs towards the Caspian Sea, and conducts, whether on the left or right of that sea, to the elevated plains of Siberia and southern Tartary. These constitute the smaller flats, which are defined towards the south by Caucasus. There the Russians inhabit Astracan, the Tartars Samarcand. This, perhaps, was the boundary of their first incursions; a sort of resting place to a people travelling in the view of conquest. Their situation, already high, would afford them a facility in scaling the mountains. Here they resided, in the mean time, till a favourable opportunity offered of passing Caucasus, and forcing the entrenchments.

You are not to suppose, Sir, that all those countries on the other side of Caucasus are destitute of fertility. This place, it is true, which furnishes water to so many regions of the globe, is in want of it itself: it is extreme generosity which impoverishes itself, in order to enrich others. Every where, however, where you see rivers, you will find fertility. In the country of Karasm, which borders on the Caspian sea, upon one of the flats of which I have just spoken,

we

we find deserts completely barren; but, in spite of the height of the soil, and a cold atmosphere, the watered plains have excellent pasturage. We may there follow the course of the *Amu* and the *Kesel*, whose banks are rich and agreeable: they produce nice fruits and celebrated melons, which are a proof that the country is not destitute of heat. If we ascend farther to the north, we shall find the country of the Eluths, or Kalmouths, one of the divisions of the Monguls. This people wander over the second flat, protected by the ramparts of Magog: it is said to be the most beautiful climate in the world. The soil in every part of this region is of an extraordinary fertility *. If it contains deserts without a vestige of cultivation, the reason is, that it wants men rather than water: those deserts are fertile enough in themselves. The vigorous energies of Nature clothe them with a tall and luxuriant grass. Lands that are watered by fountains or rivers, were they well cultivated, would be equal to the maintenance of a much greater number of inhabitants: but it is only the Mahometan Tartars who at present apply themselves to agriculture, and even they cultivate no more than is barely necessary for their subsistence: they feed upon their flocks, which feed upon grass: they break up their camp at the close of the season. Each horde, or tribe, have their own canton; the southern part of which they inhabit in

* Hist. des Voy. tom. xxv. p. 39.

winter, and that of the north in summer*. You see, then, Sir, the habitual propensity of those people: the procedure of Nature is here manifest. Those tribes follow the course of the sun. But what they practise in small, and within the bounds of their own territory, do you imagine they never executed on a large scale, and over the surface of the globe? Do you imagine that the heat of climate never called them to a distance? Can you entertain a doubt of its having tempted them to undertake long emigrations? They perambulate their possessions without difficulty, as we go from the town to the country; but when they entered upon more important expeditions, their neighbours might oppose to them what resistance they pleased: the tribes collected their numbers, the hordes united their force as a nation, and bore down every thing before them by the weight of their mass. If this people are not cultivators, it is because all their goods consist in their force: their force centers in their horse and their arms. The Tartar's horse enables him to live by incursion and pillage: his arms may give him the sovereignty of the world. He never considers himself in a settled state: he is only a passenger in a country, where he watches the moment of conquest. *Grass*, says he, *is for the brutes: man ought to live upon flesh.*—By this phrase we can easily distinguish a people of the

* Hist. des Voy. tom. xxv. p. 41, and 42.

north.

north. The inhabitant of the south is a man of sober manners: the Indian consumes only a little rice; the Chinese lives on a penny a day.

Proceeding eastward, we shall find on the third immense flat, which borders with China in the west, another division of the Monguls: they are the Kalkas Tartars. They inhabit a country extending from the fiftieth degree of latitude to the bottom of Thibet: the great desart named *Kobi*, or *Chamo*, is one of their provinces. This desart is, in some places, absolutely barren, without a tree, without a blade of grass, because it is without water*. This is the lot and misfortune of all those flats, where men, as in many other cases, suffer for their elevation; but at the two extremities of this desart, mountains raise their tops for the formation of rivers. The Kerlon, the Selinga, have waters abounding in fish, and moisten vast, fertile, and populous plains†. It is, however, in the vicinity of Solinginskoi, at the fiftieth degree of latitude, that the Kalkas Tartars enjoy those advantages. At the other extremity, Thibet comprehends plains of great fertility in the midst of its savage rocks. Those mountains appear to the eye as if they were heaped one upon another, like Ossa upon Pelion: they are so close together, that they scarcely leave a passage for the torrents which

* Hist. des Voy. tom. xxiv. p. 395.

† Ibid. tom. xxiv. p 397.

roll down with a fearful noise *. But those horrors of Nature serve the purpose of strong entrenchments; they form the security of happy plains, and an almost inaccessible retreat. It was thither the Brahmans fled, and probably eluded the pursuit of their enemies: the earth received them into the asylum of her mountains, and there they dwelt, previously to their carrying the light of science into India.

There was, then, fertility enough in some of those countries, to induce men, probably come from a severer climate, to take up with the soil, to form settlements of considerable duration, in their ignorance of better lands, and to watch the opportunity of marching forward, and the chance of reaping the fruits of usurpation. But do you believe, Sir, that those countries, in general, were never of greater fertility than they are now? Are you fully satisfied that they have been at all times equally cold and barren? These are questions which merit a particular examination. Excuse me if I pause a little; for you know that we travel solely for our instruction. What avails our seeing so much, if reason has not time to digest the ideas we receive? It is said, that every man has a genius to guard and attend him: I willingly believe it the case at present: I have one close by me; and since I have been so highly favoured, permit me to consult it, by putting

* Hist. des Voy. tom. xxv. p. 321, 323.

a ques-

a question to you. Is it not true, that a peopled country must necessarily be fertile? In our day, however, those vast countries of Tartary are no better than dreary solitudes: there men are in straggling parties, here and there. In ancient times they pressed upon one another, and some of them escaped, as the waters of a river, confined by its banks, inundate the adjacent fields. Those regions, now almost desart, were the seat of an enormous population, which overflowed on various occasions, and deluged the earth. How happens it, that there Nature conducts herself now with great economy, both in respect of men and vegetables? Barrenness and solitude are companions which accompany and succeed to each other. Was it barrenness which was the cause of solitude, or solitude which led to barrenness? When mankind quit the place of their residence, or become thin in population, forests grow up in their room, and chill the atmosphere; the soil contracts, and the earth becomes hard. Man alone has a right to open her bosom, and restore her perspiration. She emits vapours in smaller quantity, fountains become rare, and fertility dries up along with them. Man, by his restlessness and activity, seems destined to preserve the mixture and circulation of the elements: he feeds upon the fruits of the earth like the animals which attend him, and their spoils promote her fertility: he clears the soil, turns

up the mould, and vapours ascend, to return again in the form of dew. Suffer Nature to take her own course, the waters will collect in the bottoms and low grounds, which, for the future, will be cold and damp; the plains will degenerate into fen and morass: a drought will prevail on the high lands, which will in a short time become cold and arid. Observe what was the state of America at the time of its discovery, and you may judge how much Tartary must have been changed by the want of population and culture.

I conceive, then, that Tartary may have undergone such changes; I conceive that it is become much drier, more cold, and less fertile, since it came to be deserted by its inhabitants. But it was fertile, then, before this divorce took place. I was thus by no means wrong, in believing that a latitude of forty-nine degrees, corresponding to that of France and Germany, witnessed, in ancient times, the establishment of empires in Asia, nations happy, powerful, and civilized. I might go still farther, and observe to you, that effects are always proportioned to their causes. The physical effects which I have just detailed to you, are neither so powerful nor so rapid, as to account for so great a deterioration of Tartary. There is something here which we ought to examine to the bottom. Population measures and regulates itself by the fertility of soil; the one always

feels

feels the vicissitudes and losses of the other. It is evident from the emigrations of the north, that the multiplication of the species, and consequently fertility, must have been very great. If barrenness only commenced with the absence of man, it was not the cause which necessitated his departure; consequently it had no concern in putting a stop to re-production. The north, which, as Jornandes observes, was stiled the nursery of the human race—the north, which unquestionably peopled Europe and Asia, how wonderfully is it changed! It does not appear to me that Sweden or Denmark are overstocked with inhabitants; Russia has numberless provinces that are in want of population; Tartary has not even enough for the consumption of its diminished produce. What, then, could be the cause of this striking degeneracy? How come the resources of life to be, in the present day, so much less abundant? If it was the want of men that gave occasion to sterility, if Nature became tired of producing when she ceased to have consumers, it cannot be alledged that sterility checked the progress of population. Caucasus did not put a stop to the career of emigration, as is evident from the many successive emigrations that have passed it; as little can it be said that the southern climates, sufficiently stocked with inhabitants, made such a resistance as obliged the tribes to fall back, to live at home, and to proportion their population to the

means of their subsistence: if this holds true as to Europe, full of vigour and industry, it is false as to Asia, weak and effeminate, where India and China are open to the first invader. The Tartars may, without apprehension, increase the number of their families; the ancient conquerors, their brethren, sink in effeminacy, prepare them an easy prey, and the certain means of subsistence.

There is here then some permanent cause, which, in the long run, generates those changes. I confess to you, Sir, that this cause seems to me to be the diminution of heat. Opposites exist in Nature; but she produces from their mixture only: whatever is excessive does her harm, and renders her unproductive. For the abundant reproduction of our species, we must neither have the heat of Senegal, nor the cold temperature of Greenland; our poor nature, whether scorched or frozen, is nearly impotent. Ask the Persians, or even the Italians, if in the dog-days Cupid's torch is lit at mid-day; if his flame has not more splendour at the decline of day, and during the mildness of night. Though civilized man has the art and industry to surround himself with the season he prefers, the season of Nature is always more potent; the bulk of children are born here in the winter months, because they were conceived in the months of spring. Yet we have neither a very hot summer nor a very cold winter;

state of population in the north, but also for its excess in former times. If that population has stopped, it is because the climates of the north are now cold, because they are below the mean point, below the degree which, on the thermometer of Nature, marks fecundity; if that population passed its due bounds in ancient times, it was because those climates were then temperate, and that they enjoyed the bounty of heaven in that degree of moderation which the middle regions of Europe enjoy at this day.

A consideration which arises from the aspect of the country, as well as from traditional facts, occurs in corroboration of this reasoning. Why, Sir, were all the high grounds of Tartary the most inhabited? In this singular country, where vast flats, elevated more than a league above the level of the sea *, form plains, and once contained empires; that elevation cools down the temperature of the air, and gives occasion to climates as cold as those of a more northern latitude. On those heights there is no water, a circumstance which was by no means inviting. The borders of the rivers offered low and well watered plains, where the cold of a more northern latitude would be compensated by the lowness of their level. Yet you see, from the ancient history of Persia, that the theatre of all their wars was at the bottom of Caucasus, where you and I now are, the Per-

* Hist. des Voy. tom. xxv. p. 40.

sians

winter; but our month of May is of a mean temperature, and the time of love for every species of beings. It is needless to observe, that love takes no pleasures in the midst of ice: love increases and decreases with life, the former decays and languishes with the latter; if you augment the cold, you will put an end to life. A man may make what fires he pleases, shut himself up in warm air, the fluid in his veins freezes or boils with the atmosphere, as that of the barometer in a close vessel marks the variations of the external air. Observe the effect of cold upon the family of vegetables; how it thins their numbers, shortens the breed of trees, and you will be able to judge how much it must stunt the saplings of the human race. In short, all climates of the globe that are favoured with a summer and a winter, are in no otherwise prolific than our summers and winters. Fertility establishes her throne in climates blessed with a perpetual spring, in the temperate zones, so peculiarly favoured by talents and genius.

I do not enter here, Sir, into the local and political considerations which tend to promote or retard the propagation of the species. I only seek to lay before you those general principles which are founded in Nature. But attend, I pray you, to the advantage arising from the explanation I submit to you; it accounts not only for the present limited

state

sians defending it in the south, while their enemies besieged it in the north; the Kalkas, the Tanguts, the Thibetcans, inhabit another flat; it was thence that those Monguls and Manchous descended, who laid waste and enslaved India and China. What then was the cause of that preference men gave to those heights? You desire me (that I may answer for you) to consult Nature. What do men ask for; men, formed of the elements, and subsisting by their productions? They ask for earth, air, and water; that is to say, a productive soil, a kindly atmosphere, and fertilizing springs. The soil is never wanting either to their steps or inquiries; they have a kind of instinctive notion, that it is rendered fertile by the influence of the sun and the beneficence of water. In their peregrinations, when they chose to change the place of their abode in quest of a better, they must have been invited and determined by the course of the sun, and the attraction of water. This is a principle founded in the consciousness of our most essential wants; it cannot lead us wrong, since it served as so unerring a guide to those who presently inhabit the happy regions of India and China. Men, therefore, sought after the sun; their steps would consequently and necessarily conduct them from north to south, and this, in reality, is the direction of those traces which are preserved in history. But, in seeking the sun, they would pursue the

course of the rivers, or, rather, ascend towards their sources. The river would supply them with fish, its banks with pasture for their cattle, and the forests and adjacent plains would afford them the resource and diversion of the chace. In this manner they would arrive at our flats, where they would be stopped by the barriers of the mountains. The Oby, that great river of Asia, with the Irtiz, which joins it, would conduct them to Upper Siberia, and towards the mountains of Altai, where those rivers take their rise. The Jenisca would carry them nearly to the same point. Altai is that ridge which they would traverse in order enter into the bosom of those mountains where we find the ramparts of Gog and Magog. The Lena would lead them towards Selinginskoi, and to that flat which commences among the Kalkas and ends at Thibet. Caucasus intercepted their career; it was there hostilities and war commenced. The first swarm which passed the mountains studied to barricade them against the second; but the same motives, which induced them to set out, impelled them to continue their march. They saw the sun advancing to meet them, and the waters descending towards another sea: faithfully attached to their guides, they were anxious to advance with the sun, and to overtake the waters, which fled before them. They followed the course of the Kur, the Euphrates, and the fertility which those

those rivers diffuse over Persia and Syria. The Indus and Ganges shewed them the way to India, and Ghoango, or Yellow River, that to China. The principle which we have thus stated and explained, and to whose consequences we have drawn your attention, seems to me a ray of light. This progress is infinitely probable, since it is conformable to Nature; it is true, since it is agreeable to history.

I have exhibited to your view, Sir, the largest part of the globe. It is interesting by its repeated emigrations, and the frequency of its revolutions; but above all, by its institutions, which exist still in some of our own: it is the spirit of Asia which animates the nations of Europe. We descend from those summits which have afforded us this spectacle, to contemplate man in a nearer point of view, and to converse with the natives; perhaps they will instruct us respecting their succession and the line of their march, or we will instruct them by throwing light upon their traditions by the helps of philosophy.

I am, with respect, &c.

TWENTIETH LETTER TO M. DE VOLTAIRE.

[Discovery of a lost people.]

Paris, 12th April, 1778.

THE first Tartar whom we propose to consult, Sir, is a Kan of the Usbecks, who reigned in the last century at Karasm, on the borders of the Caspian Sea. He wrote a history of his nation, composed from tradition and original documents.

Asia is the country of the nobility of our race. They are not there as with us, a young upstart people, whose titles scarcely go back twelve or fourteen centuries, and end at last in the villanage of a barbarous and almost savage stock. There every thing is ancient, every thing is coeval with the earth, or with the Deluge, which created a new world. The Tartars, whom we despise, preserve their genealogy; they take their descent from the second father of the human race, Noah; and if they ascend no higher, it is because they are stopped by the Deluge. I do not give you this pedigree as a fact fully ascertained. But without adopting this high origin,

origin, we ought to listen to a people who speak of themselves, and who fill up the periods of time by well connected events, and by a regular succession of generation. Japhet, the son of Noah, went to people the banks of the Iaik and the Wolga, to the north of the Caspian Sea. It is about the 50th degree of latitude, in the most southern and highest part of Siberia. Turk, his second son, succeeded him; he is the root and origin of the name of that nation, which in the east are more generally called Tures than Tartars; the Tartars are a branch only. Taunak, son and successor of Turk, was cotemporary with Caiumarath. You see that this history connects and corresponds with that of Persia. The fifth descendant from Turk was Alanza-khan; it was under his reign that the people, enervated by a profuse abundance, forgot the true God, and took up with the worship of idols *. Thus it appears, that in former times Tartary was a plentiful country. Alanza had two sons, Tatar and Mogul, or Mongul. It was here that the Turkish nation was divided into two branches and two empires, the one formed towards the east, and all the way to the borders of the sea of Japan, under the laws and name of Tatar their founder; the

* The French translation is intitled, *The Genealogical History of the Tartars.*

other

other established themselves towards the west, under the name of Monguls. These last inhabited in summer a chain of the mountains of Altai, and in winter the banks of the river Sir, under the shelter of hills which follow its course on the side of the north *. This station, then, was between the Caspian Sea and the second flat; and here is the ancient patrimonial inheritance of the Mongul Tartars †. All those mountains served to envelope and defend their habitations and country; men have at all times sought the shelter and protection of these natural walls; the walls of cities and towns, within which men coop themselves up, were originally copied from those mountains. These Monguls, and those Tartars, though brethren, were divided by interest, as often happens in families: they were enemies, and entertained against each other an animosity, always the more inveterate that it is fraternal; it was forbidden by law for the one branch to enter into alliance with the other; and a rivality on the score of their possessions and empires put arms incessantly into their hands.

The grandson of Mongul was a monarch who left to posterity an illustrious reputation. His birth was signalized by prodigies, like that of all those who have discovered great talents in barbarous ages. At

* Hist. des Voyages, tom. xxv. p. 105.

† Ibid. p. 34.

the

the age of one year, when his father thought of giving him a name, he prevented him, and spoke to him himself, desiring that he might be called Oguz. He loved the truth before he attained the age of reason, and as if he had not been destined to a throne. We are told, that in the cradle, already convinced of the unity of God, he refused to take the milk of his mother, who was attached to the worship of idolatry; she was obliged to promise conformity to the belief of her son. He would neither make love, nor enter into the married state, but on the same conditions. In this narrative, mixed with the colouring of fable, we perceive that the mind of this prince was enlightened by principles of surprizing purity. It is in his reign that a regular series of chronology begins; a period of 4000 years elapsed between Oguz and Gengiskan; the time of Oguz is 2824 before the Christian Æra. You may recollect, Sir, that in the history of ancient astronomy, I have endeavoured to reduce, by way of conjecture, the enormous number of Tartarian cycles, and I have computed that those cycles ought to have commenced 2924 years before Jesus Christ *. Chronology, therefore, as I have settled it, agrees remarkably with the chronology of this history. Oguz was a warrior and conqueror: he subdued, as

* Hist. de l'Astron. Ancienne, p. 342.

they pretend, Tartary, China, and Persia *; it was only, however, a war of incursion and pillage, since we find he would have been embarrassed with the spoils of his victory, if they had not invented waggons for their conveyance †; besides, I conclude that neither Persia nor China were in the list of his conquests, inasmuch, as in those places, where traditions have been so carefully preserved, we find not the smallest remembrance of them. This happened in the reign of the son of Caiumarath, or rather of one of his descendants ‖. Is it not obvious, Sir, that those vagabonds and plunderers, the Monguls, are the Dives who subsisted by pillage, or at least their successors, who received the same name, as occupying the same country, with the same manners and habits ¶? This people are represented as strong and ferocious; and whether it was that they actually possessed great bodily strength, and were of an extraordinary stature, or rather perhaps that they were magnified in the imagination of men, from the terror they inspired, they were converted into giants.

This empire owed its fall at last to the efforts of the Tartars. The seventh successor of Mongul was dethroned and slain by the seventh descendant

* Hist. Gen. des Voyages, tom. XXV. p. 108 and 110.
† Ibid. p. 107.
‖ Ibid. p. 110.
¶ Ibid. p. 113.

of

of Tatar. Kagan, his son, and Nayos his nephew, alone saved themselves from the cruelty of their enemies, and escaped with their liberty. The history of this is somewhat curious. The two princes fled for safety to the most steep and savage mountains. Necessity gives wings; they climbed at the heels, and after the example of the wild goats; they were followed by their wives, and some remainder of their flocks. Having ascended to the summit of the rocks, they discovered a charming and fertile valley, but which was accessible only by a narrow defile; they contrived to enter it, and there formed a settlement. The princes saw that man, after the loss of an empire, may, though secluded from society, still be happy, if he has but the company of his wife, and access to the riches of Nature, which are the aliment of life and love. This place was called *Igaaakon*, from two words in the Mongul language, one of which signifies valley, and the other *steep cliffs*. This valley, being immured within its natural fortifications, was quite inaccessible. You see here, Sir, an instance of those vallies which I took notice of as affording a retreat where men lived and multiplied in peace and tranquillity. This last was doubtless extremely fertile; its population was immense; in the space of four hundred years, those two men gave birth to a great people. We will suppose, however, to obviate the marvellous, that

the two princes, though the only individuals of their family, yet had followers who supplied subjects, while they took care to provide them in masters. This people, as soon as they became sensible of their own power and greatness, thought of enlarging their boundaries; their retreat degenerated into a prison; nor was the soil, with all its fertility, now equal to their subsistence. But their impracticable rocks, which denied all access from without, equally precluded egress from within; the defile had been filled up in the course of time by the ravages of the torrents. Nevertheless, the people sighed for their liberty. A blacksmith, happening to discover that the mountain in certain places had but little thickness, and was composed solely of iron-stone, conceived the idea of forcing a passage by means of fire. They carried wood and coals, which they laid at the bottom of the mountain. Seventy large bellowses gave such activity to the flames, that the metal having melted, opened the way for a loaded camel. The Monguls, having recovered their freedom, issued forth by this outlet. They still celebrate the anniversary of their wonderful deliverance; on this occasion they kindle a large fire, into which they throw a piece of iron: as soon as the iron is red-hot, the Kan comes up to it, and gives it the first stroke with a hammer; his example is followed by the chiefs of the tribes, by the officers, and, last

of all, by the people, who, each in his turn, approaches and gives it his stroke *.

I can easily see, Sir, in this detail, something of the marvellous, and not unlike Hannibal's melting the rocks of the Alps with vinegar. But as all that it carries of the marvellous is derived from Nature, and as the fable of the vinegar does not prevent Hannibal's having actually passed the Alps, I am of opinion that this story is to a certain degree founded in truth. I see the institution of a festival, a festival of joyful commemoration: a man does not express joy but for some reason; an act of remembrance must necessarily have an object; and among all the natural motives which we can possibly imagine, that, I apprehend, which has been transmitted to us by tradition, is entitled to a preference. I am disposed to believe, then, that in the course of digging the mines the mountain became thin, and, continuing to pursue the vein, they pierced through its side, and opened themselves a passage. This festival is an expression, an annual repetition of national rejoicing among the Mongols, for their escape from a retreat, where, however walled in and protected as they were, they might have thought themselves but too happy. Whence I infer two things, first, that those close and populous vallies are not chimerical; secondly, that this people had the use of iron, and the

* Hist. des Voyages, tom. xxv. p. 113, 114, 115.

art of mining; an observation which may serve, perhaps, to afford us some light. Thus, Sir, you have all that I proposed to lay before you, with regard to this history. Those tribes have fallen into numberless subdivisions; but the two mother branches exist and roam around China, under the names of the Manchous and Mongul Tartars. It is needless for me to trouble you with Gengiskan, Tamerlane, and other modern tygers, who have ravaged the plains of Asia. We treat of remote times alone, and we are only concerned in the events of ancient history.

This tradition, of working mines in Tartary, coincides with several others. Abbé Bannier says, that this is the seat and native country of the famous blacksmiths of Sicily, named Chalybes*. It was from thence came the people who bear the name of Sclaves, or Sclavonians†: they received this name from the manufacture of iron which they introduced into Europe. Herbelot also adds, that the people of Gog are the Tartars whom we name Calmucks, and that of Magog, the Chalybes. You will recollect, Sir, that Homer, describing the island of Æolia, where the master of the winds exercises his sway, represents it as surrounded by steep rocks, and a wall

* L'Abbé Bannier, Mythol. tom. ii. p. 123.
† Herbelot, p. 470, 794.

of

of brass *. One should think, that an island fortified with a wall of brass, should be inhabited by blacksmiths. It is either in this island, or in that of Lippara, where Diana finds the Cyclops employed in cutting a block of red iron, in order to make a trough for the horses of Neptune †. The Greeks, who wished to naturalize among themselves all sorts of traditions, have placed that of Æolia in the island of Lippara. There are many more, and still more striking, local transpositions.

In the country of Tartary, where we continue to sojourn, we likewise find Bulgaria and Hungary ‖; consequently that domain of the House of Austria, that kingdom, as well as Bulgaria in Europe, at present a dependency of the Porte, are settlements formed by the Tartars and the northern tribes. Here we have a proof that men have been always accustomed to carry along with them the name of their country. You see, Sir, that Tartary is an object of greater interest than we should have imagined: it is the nursery of all nations; it is the theatre on which all the grand scenes of antiquity have been represented. If it has been exposed to the ravages of war; if the constitution of the atmosphere is changed; if

* Odyssy, lib. x.

† Hymn of Callimachus.—Madame Dacier, note on the tenth book of Homer.

‖ Voy. de Carpin, p. 405.

it has been deserted by the inhabitants for richer and more desirable regions—this is no reason that we should be unjust. Let us not be charged with the pride and ingratitude of upstarts; but in the days of our opulence and prosperity, let us still be mindful of our origin. You will not be displeased to see those places over which your ancestors have passed, and many ages after them. We have an excellent guide for those travels; I mean M. Pallas, a very able naturalist, who was sent by the Empress of Russia to study Nature in her vast dominions *. I shall not take up your time with the spoils of elephants, which he found at every step in Siberia, as well as in the most northern parts of Tartary †. We have been used to see elephants that have lain interred in this cold soil. The earth that covers them now, formerly bore them on its surface; a conclusion which appears to me perfectly evident. But a still more curious discovery of M. Pallas, is the relics of an ancient destroyed people, near the river Jenisea, in the vicinity of Krasnojarsk. In the Mountain of Serpents (Schlangenberg), there are mines, which were wrought by the hands of that ancient people. After

* The Travels of M. Pallas, written in German, were published in 3 vols. in folio. An extract was made from them, also in German, in 2 vols. in 8vo. of which certain passages have been translated into French—I quote from this extract.

† Tom. i. p. 317; tom. ii. p. 185, 199, 200, 201, 307, 308, 339, 343, 326, 335, 329, 40.

having

having dug their way into the ground, they appear to have been stopped by rock, and other hard substances, which the want of iron tools rendered them unable to penetrate. A great variety of the instruments they employed, such as mattocks, wedges, mallets, hammers, have been discovered. The hammer consisted of a very hard stone, a part of which was fashioned in the form of a handle: all the other instruments he met with were made not of iron, but of brass. In the mountains, as well as plains, near the Irtiz, sepulchres have been opened, in which were found knives, daggers, and the points of arrows, likewise of brass *. In sepulchres near Krasnojarsk, and the Jenisea, it is common to find tools, arms, and instruments, of brass and gold. The peasants are not a little covetous of those spoils; in spite of the prohibitions of government, they continue to molest the last retreat of humanity, and the repose of the dead. During the time M. Pallas passed at Krasnojarsk, they brought him, and he purchased, a large quantity of that old brass, with many different curiosities obtained from the tombs; such as the ends of lances, the points of arrows, mallets, or war-hammers, daggers very neatly executed, blades of knives, the figures of all kinds of animals melted in brass, and bas-relief. These figures consisted of elks, rein-deer, stags, &c. with others entirely unknown.

* Voyage de M. Pallas, tom. ii. p. 399 et suiv.

The

The materials were commonly of fine brass, or of a substance similar to that of bell-metal. The natives assured M. Pallas, that they also find in those sepulchres, the trestles, or wooden frames, upon which they laid their dead: these trestles are ornamented with figures of animals, cast in bas-relief. It is remarkable, that among all those remains of antiquity, iron has not been discovered in a single instance. Those relics, which ascertain the state of the arts, as well as the extent of the industry of the times, serve as a distinguishing characteristic of the people who left them. The Monguls were acquainted with the use of iron very early: it is obvious, then, that this ancient people could not be of the Mongul race. It is possible they may have been expelled by the Monguls, but they must have been before them. In the mines of the Mountain of Serpents, they found the skeleton of a man half petrified; beside him lay a leathern bag, full of a species of ochre which contains gold: the props or pillars that were employed to support the earth, were in a petrified state: from these petrifications they sometimes obtain brass and gold. There has elapsed, therefore, a period of time sufficient to enable Nature, besides operating those petrifications, to carry on the formation of metals; a process, undoubtedly, much more slow than that of stones. And what will not astonish us, what, in fact, seems in the natural order of things, is this—the same

lapse

lapse of time has served to consume every stone that was employed in the construction of buildings: not a single vestige of them is to be seen. However, Sir, you are too well acquainted with the progress of human affairs, and the institutions which keep pace with each other, not to perceive that the people having applied themselves to mining, must long before have built houses. Wandering tribes, who subsist by what Nature throws in their way, have only natural wants: it is society, the exclusive result of fixed and permanent habitations, which gives occasion to wants of an artificial kind. We cannot conceive that man, rambling over a desart, should ever think of inventing the arts, or of learning to distinguish metals, by far the greatest part of which, Nature conceals under differently coloured earths. The use of metallic substances is never known as a want but in civilized society. Invention requires leisure and repose; and what a variety of inventions does not the art of smelting, manufacturing, and moulding or casting metals, pre-suppose? I think I perceive, however, a certain order, with which men could not possibly dispense. When they first began to turn up the soil, they had no object but that of rendering it fertile: they would not think of rummaging below the surface, in quest of stones, till after they had constructed their huts with the trunks of trees, and employed flints or pebbles to fill up their inter-

intervals. Stones of a larger size, and compactly united, would afford them a more solid and durable shelter: the naked side of a mountain would shew them stone in different strata: they would begin to dig the mountain, and penetrate into the bosom of the earth. Quarries were the first mines opened for the use of man. Before the invention of the metallurgic arts, minerals would attract attention and curiosity by the variety of their colours: sooner or later, accident would place them in a fire of such force as to melt them, and to separate the salts and sulphurs under which they are disguised. The metal having thus shewn itself by its fluidity, would soon become sufficiently solid for all the purposes of society. It appears to me, then, not to admit of a doubt, that those people, before they applied themselves to mining, must have had houses and buildings: and since there remains not a vestige of them now, it can be owing to nothing but a great length of time, which has insensibly devoured them. The evidence of history attests the same antiquity. This people must necessarily have been of a very ancient period, inasmuch as the Turks and Monguls, who were acquainted with iron, and who inhabited nearly the same country, were posterior to them. M. Pallas is of opinion, that their actual residence must have been in the plains, and upon certain *agreeable* mountains, in the vicinity of the river Jenisea. What

leads him to think so, is, that the precious relics found there, in the nature of golden ornaments, are extremely well executed, and finished with much neatness and taste; whereas the instruments discovered near the river Irtiz are of brass, rudely executed, and destitute of every thing like taste or ornament. The truth is, that this was a residence of the same people, but at a time when they were less advanced in the knowledge of the arts. The Russians of Siberia are wholly ignorant of this ancient people; tradition, however, has preserved their name—they were called Tschouden, or Tschoudaki. This name will serve to throw light upon their origin and their emigrations; for though they have vanished from the earth, the living languages preserve certain traces of their existence. A man of great learning at Strasburgh (M. Oberlin) informs me, that in ancient times, the Finlanders were named Tschouden, or Tschoudes*. You see, Sir, that whenever we have occasion to seek for an origin, our stars lead us constantly towards the north. Krasnojarsk, the place where we found this ancient people, is about the fifty-sixth degree of northern latitude; Finland is under the sixtieth, and touches the Polar Circle; but what seems more extraordinary, is the enormous difference of longitude; a difference of no less than seventy de-

* Letter of M. Oberlin to M. Genet, at the beginning of Inquiries concerning the ancient Finlanders, by M. Idman, p. 6.

grees,

grees, which are equal to 900 leagues. You have seen that the Hungarians left a Hungary in Asia: it is thought that a certain analogy has been discovered between their language and that of Finland *. M. Idman reckons Switzerland in the number of those countries where we meet with traces of the ancient Finlanders; and, in fact, even their name is found there at this day. There exists in Switzerland an ancient and noble family, who bear the name of Tschoudi; and if, by chance, we should find that the people of whom they are descended were distinguished for virtue, knowledge, and talents, one of the branches of that family will convince you that it has not degenerated †.

Those minute facts suggest important conclusions. Languages are extremely useful in the investigation of origins. The organ of speech is, of all others, the most flexible, the most susceptible of perfection, as well as of alteration. You know, Sir, how much it is governed and diversified by the physical circumstances of climate. The same circumstances of climate which determine the genius of language, preside also over the conformation of words. The sound, the view of the characters, shew us that such a word is Chinese, Indian, Greek, &c. Were you to meet in a remote and strange country, a family who bore

* Letter of M. Oberlin to M. Genet, p. 7.

† M. the Baron of Tschoudi, ancient *Bailli d'Epee* of Mayence.

the

the name of *Ferane*, would you not conclude that they were of French extraction? And this species of origin is still more strongly marked in words that are the farthest removed from their primitive sounds, and where those sounds have been modified by a number of consonants, as in the word Tschoudi. M. Nils Idman, minister of Abo, in Finland, has composed a very curious work, in which he shews singular conformities between the Finland and Greek languages: you may see there a list of words, in which this conformity is most remarkable*. Here we must confine ourselves to general observations. We have to remark, that the Finlanders, the ancient descendants of the Scythians, are the first known inhabitants of the north†. Their language, which is still spoken without alteration, and in its primitive purity, seems to be the same with that of the Scythians‖. But they became mixed and incorporated with strange tribes: the traces of their origin, their government, and manners, are no where preserved but in mythology, language, and ancient usages.

The Finlanders celebrate a festival, singular from its resemblance to one commemorated by the Greeks.

* Inquiries concerning the Ancient Inhabitants of Finland, by M. le Pasteur Nils Idman; a work translated into French by M. Genet, the son, already known by a translation of the History of Eric the XIVth.

† Ibid. p. 13

‖ Ibid. p. 14, and 15.

This

This festival occurs in the month of Deer, and is called *Joulu*: it was the time of the year when the Finlanders used to indulge most freely in the pleasures of the table. Suidas mentions a Grecian festival named *Joleia*, celebrated in honour of Jolaos, an ancient hero in high repute among the Athenians. They also termed *Oulos* and *Joulos*, the hymns consecrated to Ceres. Those two festivals, then, have a striking resemblance, both in their name and object. Are we to believe that it was the Greeks who carried this institution so far from home, or rather, that the Finlanders came in quest of it, and established it among themselves? Neither the one nor the other of these suppositions seems probable*. The Greeks have the merit of instructing us: their writings have served to perfect eloquence and poetry in modern nations; their historians, their orators, their poets, are our delight, and the objects of our study and imitation, but they were not the preceptors of the world: they did not enlighten Asia, to which they sometimes resorted for instruction themselves: they never carried their language to the north; it was the north that peopled Europe and Asia. The conformities of usages, institutions, and language, extended from branch to branch, in their descent from this common origin. It is not the father who resembles his sons; it is the sons who have

* Inquiries concerning the Ancient Inhabitants of Finland, p. 69.

the

the features of their father: this resemblance descends and follows the course of Nature. The Greeks travelled, it is true, but in rich and enlightened countries: they planted colonies, but it was in Asia Minor, on the Mediterranean, and in climates either better, or at least similar to their own. If an instance occurred of a man such as Pitheas, who directed his travels towards the north, it was an expedition performed once; and even though it had been repeated, an individual could make no change in the language or institutions of a remote and strange people. It is either conquest or daily intercourse, and of long duration, which alone can mix different people, confound their usages, and create an alliance of language by the adoption of words. The Greeks made no such conquests; and there is no example of the intercourse to which we allude, but in the modern and civilized nations of Europe.

After having considered the people who dwelt on this side of Caucasus, we begin, Sir, to make acquaintance with their enemies, who lived on the other side of those mountains. We have first a destroyed people, bearing, in days of old, the name of Tschondes, who are only known to modern times by their subterraneous labours, and the spoils of their sepulchres: their working tools have remained in the mines, to serve as a proof of their industry: the ashes of the dead no longer appear, but the metals which

composed their ornaments and arms, under the shelter and concealment of the earth, have resisted the outrages of time. They were succeeded by a people named Turks, and their two branches, the Tartars and the Monguls. This people appeared in the world only in the character of destroyers, and are no otherwise known than by the swarms of barbarians who overspread the south of Asia. They are the people who have so repeatedly ravaged it in different periods of history, and almost in our own times. We do not learn from their own accounts, that they have any merit as the authors of institutions. That ancient people who wrought the mines, seem to me much more interesting. I would much rather that they explored and rummaged the bowels of the earth, than that they traversed her surface for the purposes of violence and devastation. This people, however, spread themselves over a great extent of surface: they shot forth their branches from the mountains of Altai, to the distance of nine hundred leagues, all the way to Finland. Their name has been widely diffused, since it is found even among the mountains of Switzerland. In spite of this vast extent of territory, which evinces a large population, and the power which naturally attends it, this people is forgotten, as well as that which I discovered by my researches into antiquity: it goes to increase the list of nations that are lost. In fact, not a syllable was

heard

heard of them till the epoch of M. Pallas's travels, whose discoveries are but recent. What, then, is the destiny of nations? Why do some bequeath so durable a memory, whilst all remembrance of others is effaced from the earth? May it not arise from this—that the memory of injuries is more deeply engraven than that of acts of beneficence? I should be tempted to conclude, that this people never did an injury to mankind. I observe that Alexander is not yet forgotten in India, though that scourge only passed through it; I observe also, that the Dives and the giants are still objects of terror in Asia. I conceive, that the Tschoudes had continued to pass their lives in peace and silence: they extended themselves by means of colonization, and made no conquests but upon Nature; they converted deserts into habitable lands. Such achievements may be forgotten, as they consist in good offices only. Since they plundered nobody, nobody brings a complaint against them; since they broke nothing, destroyed nothing, they excited none of that hatred which is rooted and perpetual, of those bitter reproaches which resound in the echoes of history like thunder among the mountains. This conclusion does little honour to humanity, but, perhaps, it is nevertheless true. At the same time, Sir, I do not wish to praise the Tschoudes at the expence of truth; a people of whom we know but little. I should be disposed to

think, that if they lived in peace, if they committed no act of violence or injustice, the merit was probably owing to circumstances, and to their antiquity in the world: at a time when it was but thinly inhabited, men might extend their boundaries without oppressing their neighbours. The human race have always been the same. Man is meek and gentle when he is satisfied: it is when he is in want, when his desires are shackled by obstacles, that he becomes violent and unjust. If I have drawn the conclusion, that the Tschoudes committed no mischief, because they have left no memory on earth, one might infer, in like manner, that they did no mischief, because they had no opportunity, because they were extremely ancient; and that having no neighbours, or such only as were at a great distance, the earth was their own. Perhaps they sent off colonies, who bearing different names, and coming into contact with other tribes, might acquire the habits of conquest and usurpation.

The discovery of this people seems infinitely curious. You can easily figure to yourself, Sir, what a lively interest I ought to take in it. I am not yet able to inform you whether this people be the same with that which cultivated astronomy and the sciences in the ancient times of Asia: I have already warned you, that I can shew you nothing but through a veil. But the Tschoudes are of a very high

high antiquity, and lived nearly under the latitude which I was led to anticipate: they were not destitute of knowledge, since they were in possession of the arts, since they understood the practice of mining, and carried on works of great labour in the mountains. After all, the Tschoudes no longer exist: they discover, however, much likeness to the people whose genius I perceived in certain detached fragments of the sciences. I know not whether I deceive myself, but it appears to me, that an opinion void of any solid foundation, a system wide of the truth, ought not to receive confirmation in this manner from subsequent discoveries. I hope you will excuse me for having conducted you to Tartary: it is something, that we have found a fifth lost people, and filled up certain chasms in history. We should be guilty of injustice to ourselves, if we were to desist from our present career of instruction. The Tschoudes, no doubt, had neighbours: we must make it our business to visit the country, compare existing languages, and inquire once more into the spirit and meaning of fables; the most ancient compositions of mankind.

I am, with respect, &c

TWENTY-FIRST LETTER TO M DE VOLTAIRE.

[Languages of the north. Garden of the Hesperides.]

Paris, 20th April, 1778.

SPEECH, Sir, is the distinguishing characteristic of man; as the expression of thought, it separates him from all living beings; as the expression of genius, it ascertains his rank, and marks the difference of one individual from another. All men, when silent, resemble each other: nations are distinguished and appreciated by their languages, as individuals are by their powers of speech. The physical constitution of language is clothed in the accent of climate: its intellect, if I may say so, discovers the genius of a people. Language is the result of ideas: the mind impresses itself upon its own work. Thus, languages properly studied and understood, may reveal to us the origin of nations; their consanguinity, the countries which they inhabited, the extent of their knowledge, and the degree of their intellectual improvement: but at the same time, man, who is capable of attaining perfection, who every day becomes, if I

may

may use the expression, more and more intellectual, rests upon a physical basis.

We ought, therefore, Sir, to be particularly careful, in comparing the languages of different people, not to regard as distinctive marks of consanguinity, resemblances which may arise from the identity of human nature. Leibnitz was the first who perceived the advantage which history might derive from a comparison of languages. The President De Brosses was of opinion, that words and sounds are imitative; but nobody, I apprehend, has contributed more to the advancement of this science, by numberless researches and happy discoveries, than M. De Gebelin. He has studied to compare all languages; he reduces every word to its primitive root; he separates also national or local additions; and what remains, being in common to all, of course belongs to a primitive language *. There is, then, a primitive language, and M. De Gebelin promises it to the public, as soon as his literary labours shall have pervaded and despoiled all others, in order to re-compose it †: it will be one of the great discoveries of the age. This language ought to consist almost wholly of monosyllables; for men in the beginning, feeling the necessity of delivering themselves as quickly as possible, in order that the expression

* M. De Gebelin, Origine de Langage et de l'Ecriture, p. 42.
† Plan General du Monde Primitif, p. 20.

might keep time with the thought, would design things by the shortest and most simple sounds. These sounds would have been confined to vowels only, if their different combinations could have sufficed to express the variety of things: hence they modified the primitive sounds by means of consonants, for the purpose of increasing the number of combinations. M. De Gebelin finds seven vowels, seven strong and seven weak consonants. Here, then, we have twenty-one sounds, and twenty-one letters which represent them: other grammarians reckon twenty-four sounds, and an equal number of letters*. These are the materials with which Nature supplies us: they are the basis of language. If this same number of letters constituted the alphabet of all languages whatever, we should not be able to draw any conclusion respecting the time of their formation. We might be led to presume, that men could neither speak nor write differently; but in those alphabets we find a variety, as to the number of letters. The people who have them in greatest abundance, have multiplied their number without necessity; they who have the fewest, are in a state of poverty, which indicates the paucity of their ideas. It is inquiries into language which have led men to distinguish with care one sound from another: those inquiries are the result of time; it is the multiplicity

* M. Beauzée dans sa Grammaire General.

of

of ideas, and the number of objects known and examined, that introduce the multiplication of sounds, and modifications of them by other sounds, in order that they should correspond to the variety of Nature, and express the different shades of thought. The number of letters, then, ought to be different among different people, in proportion to the progress of the human mind. Some, but little advanced in improvement, will not have had occasion to exhaust the sounds of the vocal organ *; others will have found employment for them all. Those alphabets, then, enable us to class different people by families. Among them I perceive two of chief distinction; the family whose alphabet consists of sixteen letters only, and that whose alphabet is of twenty letters and upwards.

The Phœnicians had, primitively, only sixteen letters, the same which Cadmus introduced into Greece †. In the same manner, the Hetruscans, the ancient Greeks, the ancient Latins, the nations of the north, the Irish, the Teutons, and the ancient Swedes, had but sixteen letters in their Runic language. We may regard the states of Greece and Italy as the descendants of the Phœnicians and Phrygians; but the nations of the north, who spoke Irish and Runic, appear to have had a common origin with the Phœnicians; an origin which seems to be

* M. De Gebelin, Origine du Langage, p. 412.

† Pliny, lib. vii. c. 56.

demon-

demonstrated by the same number of letters. We can perceive that they had issued from the bosom of one individual people, nearly about the same time, and the moment of a certain progress in knowledge and language. The Sanscrit, or sacred language of the Brahmans, has nineteen letters: the Zend and the Pelhvi, which are the ancient Persian, have twenty in their alphabet*. Here, then, we have a different family. We already had occasion to remark, that in passing from Phœnicia into Persia, we entered a new world; we saw a different set of manners and usages. This is not all: you see that the language of the ancient Persians was more formed, and approached nearer a state of perfection. This people, then, were settled at a less ancient period: they left behind them more of the productions of art, and a higher degree of improvement: they had sprung from the human race in a state of greater maturity. The Phœnicians on the one hand, the Persians and Indians on the other, springing from the same stock, as appears by the most undeniable conformities, by a multiplicity of traditions and astronomical monuments, which are in common to them all, branched off, therefore, at different epochs; the Phœnicians first, the Indians and Persians later, and at such a distance of time as was, no doubt, sufficient to destroy all resemblance in the language, ideas, and knowledge

* M. De Gebelin, Origine du Langage, p. 459.

in general, of the same people; it was with some reason, then, that I drew a line of demarcation between those nations of Asia.

But, Sir, the conformity which we find between the Phœnician and Runic alphabets, ought to lead us to other conclusions. Seeing that the Phœnicians and ancient Swedes have the same origin, are we to presume that it was the former, who, quitting their beautiful country, their sun, their sea, so advantageously situated for trade, sought a settlement in the frozen north of Sweden? This is far from being the direction we have already assigned to the progress of population *; men who have been favoured by Nature's indulgence, do not willingly expose themselves to suffer her rigorous inclemencies. The voyage, besides, would be intolerably long; we ought, I think, to spare them one half of the way; and since our preceding conversations and travels have conducted us to the foot of Caucasus, whence we have seen the Phœnicians descend under the name of Atlantides, the ancient Persians, the Indians, and even the Chinese, the origin of that people ought to be in Tartary, where we now sojourn; it was there that the separation originally took place. Certain colonies directed their course northward, while others advanced towards the south; and even upon the supposition that the climates of the Bear were as

* See Letter Eighth to M. De Voltaire.

inclement,

inclement, and as little favoured by the sun as they are at present, still the conductor of the infant colony would not exchange a burning heat for all the severity of cold: they would set out from a mean temperature towards the two extremes.

Let us recollect also, that Syria and Phœnicia, like Egypt, were eminently distinguished by the worship of the sun, which could take its rise nowhere but in the countries of the north. The people who import their religion and worship, import also their language; were they to change it, their gods would be at a loss to understand them. Language and worship, therefore, are both equally descended from the north.

Leibnitz, who considered languages in a philosophical light, though under a different point of view, distinguished them in like manner into two families. He ranks the languages of the north under the name of *Japetian*, and those of the south under that of *Aramean*. These languages, equally the growth of Asia, were then separated by Caucasus, by those same rocks which separate the people; on one side they are harsh and rough, like the people themselves, owing to the severity of the cold; on the other they have the softness of the natives, and are rendered more soothing by the mild influence of climate.

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We will subjoin to those general features a few particular observations. Be not afraid that I shall fatigue your patience with a dull mass of erudition; that is beyond my ability; besides, it is not necessary to our object; great truths are not to be proven by detail; they rest frequently on a single fact. But I am sure I shall give you pleasure by speaking of Troy—Troy will suggest to you the memory of Homer. *Pergama*, the Phrygian name of this celebrated city, is a northern word. *Berg*, or *berghem*, in the languages of the north, still signifies a castle or city *. The word *bal*, lord, the Oriental name of the sun, the ruler of the universe, has the same origin. *Scaphe*, in Greek, scapha, scyphus in Latin, seem to come from *scipki*, or *scyphee*, which, in the northern languages, signify a ship. Apollodorus says, *that Hercules arrived at the extremities of the world in the bowl or cup of the sun.* We know that Hercules is the sun itself; we know also, that the word bowl, or cup, had the two significations of bowl and ship, and that there it is to be taken for ship. According to the ancients, the stars sail in ships, supported by the liquid air or æther. Hence

* Olaus Rudbeck *de Atlantica*, tom. i. p. Seq. I give that signification after Rudbeck. I know that *berg*, in German, signifies a mountain. But as habitations were in old times on high grounds, they would naturally be the seat of forts or strong holds; and those forts or towns were named *berg*, because they were always situated upon the mountains.

I con-

I conclude, that the word is of northern origin; and I make this conclusion with the more reason, that the English, at this day, have an analogous term, the word ship; and that the Kourilles, who inhabit the other extremity of the globe, the most northern part of Camchatka, under the sixtieth degree of latitude, name, in like manner, a canoe, *tchip*. You will not alledge that the Kourilles are a colony of Englishmen; but you will say, that those two people set out from the same spot, and acquired in their source the same language. Never was there a common origin more clearly evinced. If the root of the word should be said to be imitative *, the termination has no such natural origin; it is a choice almost purely arbitrary among an infinity of other sounds: it is but little probable that any two people should have agreed in this selection. I infer also from this word, that the fable of Hercules carried in the vessel of the sun, came from the north; for the words would not arrive unattended by the things themselves: I have other reasons for believing this, which it is my business to state to you in detail; I owe them to my precursor, Rudbeck.

I believe nobody doubts, Sir, that the Theban Hercules, the son of Amphitryon, or rather of Ju-

* M. le President de Brosses has observed, that the root *ar*, *ak*, or *ab*, always conveys the notion of something hollow; it is, therefore, organical and imitative. See his book, intitled, The Mechanism of Language.

piter

piter and Alcmene, was formed upon the model of the Oriental Hercules. The Theban Hercules was named Alceus *, on account of his strength; he did not receive the surname Hercules till he acquired celebrity by his great achievements; till he had combated monsters, and purged the earth of noxious animals, like the Oriental and Phœnician Hercules. This Hercules, who is the original, is then the most ancient, and the only genuine personage of the name. It is of no immediate consequence to us, whether this hero was the sun, or his history an allegory. Fables, as well as allegories, have, like men, something national about them, by which they may be distinguished; like them they have a native country, and it is this country which we are in quest of. Hercules is not only an Asiatic, but he is a man of the north. Every thing that springs from our soil, every thing we cultivate with our hands, is propagated by branches, and multiplied by shoots or suckers: the natal earth contains and preserves in its bosom the roots of the plants it has produced. The name Hercules is evidently foreign to Greece; it is there alone, without family or connexions †; its roots remain in

* Diodorus Siculus, tom. i. p. 49.

† It may be said, that the Greek word *Heraclès* comes from *Hera*, and *cleos*, which signifies glory; but the word *Hera* itself comes from the north, where *here*, *ear*, signify a man. *See* Eloge of Leibnitz, note 22d. The Swedish word *Her* denotes an army, because an army is composed of men.

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the languages of the north. *Her*, in Swedish, signifies an army; *heria*, devastation; *herbod*, the declaration of war; *herbunad*, arms and military apparatus; *hera-clede*, a man armed for war; *her-full*, or *her-culle*, the chief of a military band *. It is a known truth, that all proper names had once some signification; they are foreign to a language in which they have no value, and belong to the country where they mean something. I was not mistaken, then, when I told you that Hercules was a hero of the north; and as Hercules is an emblem of the sun, and as the worship of this star descended from the north, those two origins serve to confirm each other.

And now, Sir, do you not perceive that those Dives, so famous, so terrific, in the annals of Persia; those giants, who converted Caucasus into a citadel, having revolted against Jupiter, piled mountain above mountain, in order to scale heaven, heaved rocks against Jupiter to kill him, as they destroyed Huschenk, the hero of Persia, Hercules came to the assistance of Jupiter and the Gods, who, in gratitude for his services and victory, gave him the surname Olympian †? It is the name of a mountain, of that which is the prop of their throne and empire: every body dwelt, every thing passed in those days, upon the mountains; the good, as well as the

* Olaus Rudbeck, *de Atlantica*, tom. i. p. 750, 51, 52.

† Diodorus Siculus, tom. ii. p. 35.

bad,

bad, skulked in their recesses; there the former hoped to find peace, the latter to escape punishment. You will agree, Sir, that those Grecian fables have a strong resemblance to the fables which constitute the early history of the Persians. The war of Moisasor, is probably the model of that of Briareus and the other giants against Jupiter *; but is not that of Moisasor itself evidently copied from the primitive history of Persia, which being more simple, and in detail, shews that it is the source of all the others, which have been darkened by time, and loaded with the marvellous by tradition? Did not this same Hercules rescue Prometheus from the devouring eagle of Caucasus †? Is not this still Hercules in the same Scythia, where we find the origin of every thing, pursuing his exploits, and carrying his good offices to the summit of Caucasus, whence the Atlantides descended, as well as the worship of the sun, and where the Persians took their origin and the beginning of their history?

I do not wish to found upon the names of places quoted as the theatre of fable, but inasmuch as they agree with the meaning and spirit of those fables, and with our natural ideas of things; but then I derive from this agreement a double light, which enables me to proceed with security. Historians frequently

* *Supra*, Letter of M. De Voltaire.

† Diodorus Siculus, tom. ii. p. 35.

confound every thing; I shall only quote you, by way of example, the Amazons and Gorgons. Euristeus imposed upon Hercules, as his ninth labour, that he should bring to him the shoulder-belt of the Amazon Hypolite: the hero traverses the Euxine Sea, and proceeds to find the Amazons in a place named Themiscire, upon the banks of the Thermodon. Thus it was in Asia, between the Black and the Caspian Seas, in the countries which separate Persia from Caucasus, that the Amazons dwelt. What says Diodorus Siculus? He speaks in another place of the Amazons of Africa, and tells us they were more ancient than those of Asia, who still existed at the time of the siege of Troy *. Those ancient Amazons reigned in an island named Hesperia, because it is situated to the west of the lake Tritonides. This lake was in the neighbourhood of Mount Atlas: the Amazons attacked the Atlantides and subdued them. They were also at war with the Gorgons, of whom Medusa was queen, Medusa, crowned with snakes, and whose head, separated from her body, performed such a number of metamorphoses. All those warlike females lived in Africa, and towards the sea, in its western extremity. But behold, Sir, Myrina, queen of the Amazons, who sets out with an army of women, traverses the whole of Africa, where, you

* Diodorus Siculus, tom. i. p. 223.

know,

know, we had not courage enough to persevere; the heat is of no consequence to her; she enters Egypt to form a friendly alliance with Orus, son of Isis, who at that time governed the kingdom. This was not enough; she advances to attack the Arabs, subdue Syria, and then proceeds to Taurus, or Caucasus, where we are always led back at last. One might suppose that those Amazons, now that they are so far from home, and in so fine a country, would settle there. But the historian chuses to make them return on their steps; they traverse all those populous countries, as well as burning sands, with the same facility as in their first expedition: it was necessary they should return to the borders of the ocean, since it was there that Hercules, after finishing his career, ought to extirpate those female governments, Gorgons and Amazons! It is no doubt wonderfully natural, that women should associate apart in political bodies, revolt against the men, and against nature, in order to form themselves into two entire nations; and nations so puissant, that they subdue by force of arms many states of the other sex, whom they might have more easily conquered by the weapons of love. The women can no more live alone than we can live without them; they would have seen nothing within the limits of their kingdom but a dreary solitude. This Amazonian people, is, no doubt, a mere chimera; and the victory

of Hercules only an allegory *: but as soon as history gave it a place, it employed it for a double purpose. The two victories of Hercules in reality make but one. Diodorus, by conducting the Amazons of Africa to Caucasus, unveils to us the origin of the fable; it was there it took its rise. The reason why authors placed the Amazons in Africa was, that it was known they had carried on war with the Atlantides; and when history lost the clue of that people, when deceived by the Pillars of Hercules, which are near Cadiz, it placed the island Atlantis in that region of the ocean where are the Canary isles: it was indispensably necessary that the Amazons should be in their vicinity, and, therefore, it assigned them a place on the borders of the same sea. I am infinitely desirous that you should decide upon these reflections. I should not have advanced them, if I had not been persuaded that they are well founded. I apprehend that it belongs to reason to pronounce upon history, and above all, the history of antiquity, which time has rendered a sort of chaos; it belongs to philosophy to examine it narrowly, and to discriminate the fragments of the past in order to restore them to their proper place.

It is now a long time, Sir, that we have lost sight of the Atlantides; we were busy pursuing their traces: but it frequently happens that a man will

* M. De Gebelin, Allegories Orientales.

make

make many fruitless efforts and advances before he comes at a discovery. Had I been travelling alone, it would have been a matter of little surprize if I had missed my way; but journeying in your company, it appears to me that I have not made a single step without acquiring new light. You see the progress we have made; we left the Atlantides at the foot of Caucasus, and we shall find them again on the other side of the same mountains. Hercules, who gives battle to the Amazons, delivers Prometheus from his rock—Hercules, in fine, who took his name from the northern languages, is a native of the north; Hercules is of the family of Atlas, and ought to know the country which he anciently inhabited; he will inform us himself, and direct our travels by the line of his own. The golden apples, in the garden of the Hesperides, made the twelfth and last labour of Hercules. It was necessary that the hero should return to Africa, where he had been before, since it was there the ancients placed those celebrated gardens, in which were the precious trees loaded with golden apples, and watched by a dragon. We shall now see whether the ancients were consistent either in their geography or narrative. Hesperia was an island, as has been already observed *: Maximus of Tyr will speak to us concerning it more in detail. *It is*, says he, *a narrow*

* *Supra*, p. 311.

and confined land, stretching out in length, and surrounded on all sides by the sea. It is there Atlas is revered, and has the honour of statues. Atlas is a hollow mountain of considerable height. The interior valley, in the form of a well, is full of trees and fruit. It is difficult of descent, by reason of its steepness, and it is guarded by religion *. This description reminds us neither of Africa nor Spain, where it has been also thought that Hesperia was situated; those countries cannot be said to be *a narrow and confined land, surrounded on all sides by the sea.* Do you not perceive here, Sir, the island and the little mountain inhabited by the good man Evenor, with his wife Lausippa †? This mountain, which became afterwards the inheritance of Atlas, was deemed sacred by his posterity. Hesiod informs us, that the island of the Hesperides, or of the Gorgons, is beyond the ocean, at the end of the world, and in the country which is the habitation of night ‖. Where shall we place this country of night? The evening makes its approach from the east, whence the light arises the succeeding day; in the morning it withdraws towards the west, where we saw the sun disappear, and leave our abode, to communicate his rays to other regions. Day and night come to us

* Maxim. Tyrius, in dissert. 38. c. 225. Olaus Rudbeck, t. i. p. 340.

† *Supra*, p. 35.

‖ Hesiod Theog. v. 274. Rudbeck, tom. , p. 565.

then

then from the same place; and when they leave us, they pursue the same route, and seem to have the same retreat. You same poets, in spite of the creative power you derive from genius, still preserve a certain congruity in your fictions: even there truth is in her place; and she is so much the more pleasing, that she is only seen through the brilliant veil which your imagination has thrown over her. In your hands, discord, politics, become living characters: I hear them speak, I see them act; I perceive in their hands the threads which govern the world, or the torches which may reduce it to ashes. But, Sir, you have placed politics in Rome; when Ariosto had occasion for discord, he went to seek it in the cloisters: neither of you would have placed winter and its frozen train in the Torrid Zone. You would not have placed the land of darkness in the country of the morning, where stand the gates of day; nor towards the west, under an inflamed horizon, where light flows in torrents from the setting sun. Night, as well as day, travels over the earth, and has no retreat where she exercises an exclusive reign. But she constantly affects one of the two Poles; and if she quit one, it is only to leave the other in darkness. There she appears domiciliated for a more considerable space of time. Here then is properly the place of her residence, where she chuses to sojourn six months of the year; and in former times,

one might have thought that she left this mansion once a day, and descended to our globe for some hours, to suspend our labours and close our eye-lids. If in your national poem you had had occasion for the presence of night, it is there you would have gone to find her, in the bosom of an ocean of darkness. Hesiod acted like you. *Night*, says he *, gave birth to the Hesperides, who watch the golden apples beyond the ocean: *Atlas*, he adds elsewhere †, *in the region of the Hesperides, and at the extremities of the world, bends under necessity and the weight of the heavens, which he supports on his shoulders.* The country of the Hesperides, to which we are to refer the abode of night, is, therefore, under the Pole, or, at least, it is at no such distance from it as that Hesiod, in virtue of his poetical license, might not place it there. I will quote you still another poet, one of the great masters whom you have excelled; I mean Eschylus. He introduces Prometheus, in gratitude for his deliverance, instructing Hercules in the road that leads to the garden of the Hesperides. He advises him to pass Caucasus, the very route which we have taken. You see, then, that I have not misled you. *Thou wilt come*, says Prometheus, *to the Ligurians, an innumerable and intrepid people; but the combat will be painful and difficult. It is the*

* Hesiod, Theog. v. 211. Rudbeck, tom. i. p. 565. Hesiod, v. 517.

will

will of fate that thou shouldst quit thy arrows; it will not even be in thy power to tear up the rocks glued to the frozen earth. Jupiter, however, touched with thy distress, will stretch out, under the Pole, a snowy cloud, full of round stones, and the soil shall be covered by its shadow. Armed with those stones, thou shalt be enabled to destroy the ferocious multitude of the Ligurians *. The truth makes its way through the obscurity of fiction, and we know its features. The cloud which spreads its obscurity over the soil, is the long night of the Pole; the stones which the cloud carries in its bosom, are nothing but the globular grains of hail; Hercules laying aside his arrows, is the sun, whose rays at that distance from the Equator are feeble and languid; and the poet describes the soil as consisting of one mass, hardened by the cold, to which the rocks are doubly bound by the cement of frost.

You will not easily admit, Sir, that verses are nothing but mere falsehoods: a poet may modulate his song, for the purpose of rendering truth more soft and insinuating; but his song must say something; we are not to be satisfied without a little of the truth. Eschylus, in conducting Hercules to the garden of the Hesperides, borrowed his fiction from the climate itself. He was aware that Hercules meant the sun; he makes him arrive without arms or without rays, and represents the obscurity as the assistance of Jupi-

* Strabo, Geog. lib. . p. 183.

ter.

piter. The resources of his hero consist in the phenomena of frost; and he fights in armour, with which he is furnished by the climate; but either the poet would be little worthy of the philosopher's attention, indeed of that of any sensible man, or the place where he lays the scene of his poem ought not to be a fiction. You have placed the Temple of Love in the island of Cyprus; you have enriched and adorned it with all the imagery of a poetical imagination: but ancient tradition was your guide; and you have conducted and set down the god among the people of antiquity of all others the most addicted to love: Eschylus did not take, nor indeed ought he to take, a greater liberty than you. If Prometheus sends Hercules towards the north, in quest of the golden apples of the Hesperides, it is because tradition had placed in that quarter of the earth the garden of the daughters of Atlas, and in the very island which contains the mountain of his own name. If you wish to have farther evidence, you may have that of Apollodorus.

The golden apples stolen by Hercules, says he, were not, as some have thought, in Lybia; they were in the Atlantis of the Hyperboreans*. The ancients are so serviceable to us, they bring to light so much truth through the medium of their fables, that I will take the liberty to recall one more to your

* Apollodorus, Mythol. lib. ii. Rudbeck, tom. i. p. 346.

recol-

recollection; I mean that of Phaëton driving the chariot of the sun, carrying heat to the frozen stars of the north, awaking at the Pole the Dragon benumbed with cold, setting fire to heaven and earth, and, finally, precipitated by thunder into the waters of the Po: his sisters weep his destiny, and the precious tears of affliction fall into the river without mixing with the waters; consolidate without losing their transparency; and, acquiring a beautiful golden colour, are changed into that yellow amber which was esteemed so valuable by the ancients. The moderns, who have studied only the geography of their own country, are disposed to find in it all the names transmitted to us, whether by history or fable: thus Eridanus becomes the Po, which waters the plains of Italy. But I ask you, Sir, was it in Italy that those fables were invented? Do the Latins seem to have produced any thing at all of this sort? Were not all the gods strangers in the country? Do not the poems of Orpheus, Hesiod, and Homer, with the Greek tragedies, contain all the fables of which Ovid chose to become the historian? The Greeks, to whom Orpheus related those fables, originally found in the east, would not have laid the scene of them in Italy: they never perverted things in this manner, but to make them originate among themselves; but we are prepared to refute all those impostures of national vanity. Vanity is commonly awkward and off its guard:

guard: it has retained here one fact, which gives evidence against itself; a fact which carries a characteristic of the countries where the fables actually took their rise; I mean the yellow amber, that bituminous production of the sea, formerly in request as a female ornament, before the use of precious stones; at present valuable in the estimation of the naturalist, as having afforded the first hints of the electrical fluid, which acts so great a part in the phenomena of the universe. This yellow amber, which is a production of the north seas, is thrown by the waves on the shores of the Baltic*. Do you not think it somewhat singular, Sir, that amber should grow in those seas, from tears shed by the sisters of Phaëton in Italy, on the banks of the Po? It must be acknowledged, that those tears were shed in the north, that Phaëton, quitting the path prescribed to the sun, deviated towards the regions of the Bear, and was there thrown from his seat, and drowned in a river of that quarter of the earth. Besides, Herodotus mentions a river which the barbarians name Eridanus†, and which flows into the north seas, at the extremity of Europe. He observes, that this is not a Greek, but

* Encyclopædie, art. Amber.

† On a map inserted in the first volume of the Ancient Memoirs of the Academy of Petersburg, we find the Eridanus, which falls into the Gulph of Riga, and which now bears the name of *Duina*. In this gulph are the islands which Herodotus calls *Electridæ Insulæ*.

a bar-

a barbarous term, that is to say, foreign to Greece*. I own, that Herodotus himself confesses that he knows nothing, with much certainty, as to the northern extremities of Europe; but with the information we have already obtained, and aided by philosophy, which serves as our guide, we know more of the subject than him. If he tells us, that the name Eridanus was given to a river of the north, it is enough to shew us clearly, that this name was applied to a river of Italy, at a time when they were desirous to naturalize those fables in the country. Diodorus Siculus will tell you also, that this fable took its rise, and that amber is gathered, in an island called Basilea, situated opposite to Scythia, and beyond the Gauls.

It hence follows, Sir, that the Celts, or Gauls, were in the neighbourhood of the Scythians. I am told, that I have quarrelled with those good friends the Gauls: I must endeavour, then, to make my peace with them. I revere them, because they were our ancestors; I love them, because they were frank, faithful, and brave. I know no reason why they should be angry: I have said nothing which ought to give them offence. I have only said, that they were not astronomers; that they had but one astronomical period, which was bad: *one may be a very honest man, and write bad verses.* They have served me

* Herodotus, lib. iii.

with

with an indictment—me, Sir, who know but little of business, and still less of chicane. Their Druids have made choice of an excellent counsellor, such as I should have chosen myself, if I had had a cause to defend. He has pled their cause with zeal, but with politeness towards me *: I should have been seduced, if it had been possible. But I think I have a right to denounce him to you. He is much more than I am, the enemy of your Indians: he has plundered them of every thing. It is no longer the east which is the source of light and science: it is the west which gave us the Druids, and the preceptors of the world. You are too formidable an enemy: I have not the courage to put arms in your hands, against a man who has treated me with so much indulgence. However, Sir, all the world may be in the right: it is an advantage which I desire like every other man, but not exclusively; and I shall content myself by sharing it with others.

Celtica was a country of immense extent; it included provinces far in the north, where winter is of great length, and the cold excessively severe. In those parts grew neither the vine nor the olive †. A large proportion of Celtica lay beyond the Hercynian forest, bordered with the ocean, and stretched all the way to the confines of Scythia ‖. A king in this

* See a Memoir upon the ancient Gaulic Druids, by M. Beaudeau.

† Diodorus Siculus, p. 228 and 250.

‖ Ibid. p. 240.

country

country had a daughter of extraordinary beauty: she was proud, like all other handsome females, despised her suitors, and thought that nobody but Hercules was worthy of her hand. This hero, always at the command of Euristeus, carried off by force the cows of Gerion: he halted in Celtica, where he built the city of Alesia, married the princess, and had a son by her, named Galates. This son, having the warlike dispositions of his father, became a conqueror, added to the number of the countries under his dominion, and left them the name of Galatia, or Gaul*.

I know with what courage, and above all, with what bodily strength, Hercules was endowed; but we ought not to fatigue him needlessly. You observe, that he goes to combat the Amazons on the other side of Caucasus; that he proceeds nearly to the Pole, in order to pull the apples of the Hesperides: it would be cruel to make him return to Spain, to carry off the cows of Gerion, and to France, to build the city of Alesia, of which nobody ever heard a word. I can see no necessity for this, since Diodorus Siculus informs us that Celtica is on the confines of Scythia. Hercules, from the convenience of vicinity, might accomplish all those things without a great deal of travel, and without rambling from one end of the world to the other. The truth is, that neither Gerion, his cows, nor Galates, his mother,

* Diodorus, p. 227.

nor

nor the city of Alesia, were ever more in France and Spain, than the Heliades were in Italy, to whose plains the Eridanus, which produces amber, never carried a drop of water. But, Sir, I have already had occasion to observe, that a people in a state of emigration never change either their home or their ideas: they give ancient names, names familiar and dear to them, to the new countries in which they obtain a settlement. The present is the child of the past, and bears its resemblance. What we read of those ancient times, we have in the history of our American colonies, to which we have transported France, England, and Spain. The day will come, I have little doubt, when learned men will seek there, if not the cows, at least the kingdom of Gerion. In the mean time, it is there they would wish to find the Pillars of Hercules, the country of his son Galates, and of the city of Alesia. So long as men will not take philosophy for their guide, those errors of names, and the new state of things, which is a copy of the old, will not cease to breed confusion in history. When a torrent which gives rise to a river descends from the mountains, you are not astonished to find in the plains the wreck of trees and plants, which grow no where but on their tops: it is the river, which, by the rapidity of its current, carries them far from the place of their growth. Just so, Sir, population is that great river, which, descending from its high

source,

source, carries down in its progress words and ideas along with the successive generations of men. Would you wish to find out where those fragments scattered over our plains were produced?—ascend to the mountains, against the course of the stream. Would you wish to know the origin of our terms, of our ideas?—traverse space and time against the progress of population; you will come to the source of our species, and it is there you will discover the origin of things. I conceive then, Sir, that those honest Gauls are descended, like other people, from the common parent-country. The Druids sung to them in verses similar to those which Orpheus formerly sung in Greece: their instruction, like that of the Greeks, was derived from the same ancient traditions. But I must confess, at the same time, that the first were not so highly favoured as the latter. The stock of a tree sends forth various branches, but though nourished from the same trunk and roots, they are unequally loaded with fruit. Orpheus gathered his from a richer branch: the Druids had the misfortune to get only a withered bough. Thus, Sir, you must observe, that all these fables carry us back towards the north: that of Phaëton is connected with it, by the production of yellow amber, and by the river Eridanus, which discharges its waters into the northern ocean. All the labours of Hercules, true or allegorical, were either executed or invented in the

same quarter. The garden of the Hesperides is near the Pole. I confess the conclusion is not a little surprizing. An orchard which produces golden apples, ought, one should think, to have a fertile soil: gold is the sign of richness. And though those apples, according to the notion of certain interpreters, should mean no more than sheep bearing massy yellow fleeces, fine sheep are only produced in a fine country: it is the climate which modifies the fruits and vegetables: it is to plants that animals owe their existence. This fertility deranges somewhat the notion we form of a country where nothing is to be seen but ice. I might hence deduce a very notable argument in favour of the refrigeration of the earth; and if the conclusion be as fair as it seems to me, it will have but the greater force that I leave you to make it yourself. I do not despair of reconciling you to the climates of the north: it is my wish to establish them completely in your opinion. I have not yet shewn you all the treasure preserved in the memory of mankind: this will make the subject of my first Letter. Are not those countries miserable enough, to have been deserted by the sun; covered with ice, which acquires an additional thickness every year; left desart by the emigration of its inhabitants? Are we too to abandon them? Ought we not rather to console them for the losses they have sustained, and for their present state, by doing them justice, as to

what

what they were in former times? Ah! Sir, does it not become you, who, as a philosopher, ought to be just, who, as a poet, have a source of heat in yourself—to vivify those frigid and desart regions, and to restore to them in your descriptions the heat of their primitive estate? I only make you my report, and submit matters of fact to your consideration: if you find they establish the truth, it will be for you to give it life and colouring from the fire of your genius.

I am, with respect, &c.

TWENTY-SECOND LETTER TO M. DE VOLTAIRE.

Paris, 28th April, 1778.

THE most curious and interesting of all fables, as well as the most proper to illustrate the question upon which we differ, Sir, is perhaps the fable of Hell. While men took so much pains to embellish the past, they were not unmindful of the future. The Elysian Fields, which they were one day to inhabit, they chose to replenish with chimeras of a gentle and soothing description: they bestowed upon the other life, repose, oblivion of cares, but above all, the knowledge of the truth and of Nature. It is to the Elysian Fields, then, we ought to resort for the discovery of truth; but we are unwilling to part with a life always dear, though always troublesome. At the same time, we see that the poets and heroes of antiquity went down alive, and in health, into the abode of the shades. Orpheus descended into hell, in quest of his wife Eurydice: he is the first of the Greeks whom love inspired with so much courage. It never would have come into his thoughts, nor would he have succeeded in the attempt, if the Orientalists had not shewn him the way. After his example,

ample, Theseus, Perithous, Bacchus, Hercules, Perseus, Ulysses, went there in like manner. Virgil conducted Æneas to the same place. You yourself, Sir, were the conductor of Henry the Fourth, when St. Louis shewed him the destinies of France. Why should we not attempt what so many of the ancients have attempted before us, and why should not we succeed as well as they? I doubt, I despair of nothing, while you are with me. We have been exploring different countries and races of men; why should we not endeavour to determine the position of hell?

When men studied to establish good morals in this life, upon the idea of a life to come, it was necessary they should suggest something in lieu of their own ignorance. The imagination set to work; and hence all those fabulous, but allegorical, histories, in which there is not one grain of truth, except that severe justice which renders to vice and virtue according to their deserts. Mankind, sadly ignorant as they are, during their lives, did not content themselves with deciding as to what they should be after death; they aspired also to point out their final residence, and the place of their repose. We can easily conceive, that the geography of the next world, and of a future state of existence, must have been liable to many mistakes. The situation of hell was, doubtless, a matter of considerable difficulty to ascertain: every body placed it according to the train of his own ideas.

Milton consigned it to utter darkness, in the abyss of chaos: you, Sir, a disciple of Newton, and familiar with all the globes which people the regions of space—you have selected one of them as the seat of hell, at an immense distance from the throne of the Almighty—*par de la tous les cieux, le Dieu des cieux reside**. The ancients never thought of making this distinction: the dismal banks witnessed the arrival of all mortals indiscriminately, virtuous as well as vicious. Tartarus and the Elysian Fields lay quite contiguous, in the dominions of Pluto. The ideas, as they removed to a distance from their source, underwent a wonderful change! It does not appear that philosophy had taken the smallest lead in them: it would have placed a distance like that of heaven from earth, between the dungeons of guilt and the last asylum of virtue. You know, Sir, that the life of man in a future world was copied from his life in the present. The ancients long believed, that as every thing issued out of the earth, every thing was destined to return to it again. When they came to acquire more just ideas of the soul's immortality, they nevertheless adhered to the same prejudice, and placed hell in the bosom of the earth. It was necessary, however, it should have gates and passages, to admit the intercourse of men; and as each baron has a

* Far beyond all heavens, the God of Heaven resides.
Henriade, chant septiem.

gibbet

gibbet of his own, so each people chose to have among themselves their own hell and elysian fields. Should we ask the Latins, Virgil for example, the road by which we shall get to it?—he will answer, that the entrance to those profound caverns is at Baia, near the Avernian Lake, in Italy. Have you no inclination to smile, Sir, when you see Madam Dacier gravely place in this recent country, Acheron, Styx, Cocytus, and treat the geography of Homer as fabulous, because that illustrious poet, who derived his information from the most ancient documents, has placed the entrance to hell in a different quarter *? The nations of Italy were too young to have invented those religious fables, or to have had the source of them in their country. The Greeks had at least as much effrontery, nor were they less addicted to imposture. According to them, Acheron, Cocytus, Phlegethon, were rivers of Epirus; Styx was in Arcadia †. The Greeks, however, were but little older than the Latins; nor in their early times had they a better claim to the character of inventors. Besides, their thefts are known: Diodorus Siculus has betrayed the secret. A people more ancient than them, I mean the Egyptians, assert the merit of those institutions. It was a custom among them to judge men when they had ceased to live, when they were

* Remarques sur le livre x. de l'Odyssée.

† Bannier, Mythologie, tom. ii. p. 439.

brought to the borders of the lake over which Charon was to transport them. The right of sepulture was denied to such as had not deserved it; that peaceful abode was reserved as the exclusive reward of virtue. These facts serve to shew us, Sir, that the fables have been transplanted: hell, its rivers, the terrible boatman, have all travelled over the globe; and, inasmuch as we see them pass from Egypt into Greece, and from Greece into Italy, might not one naturally suspect that Egypt itself was not their first abode? Diodorus Siculus tells us, that it was from that source Orpheus derived all his ideas *. I should much sooner believe that he acquired them in the east †, at the same school with the Egyptians. You have seen that religious worship descended from Mount Caucasus: the idea of an eternal judgment, and that of rewards and punishments after death, must have held the same course. We have no longer Orpheus, who was the first teacher of that Oriental theology, but Homer was bred under him, and consequently Homer is in condition to instruct us. After you, I am but little worthy to be his interpreter. In recalling his ideas to your recollection, I find myself placed between two great poets; but I am there like those substances in Nature, which transmit, without being able to produce, the electrical fire.

* Diodor. de Sic. tom. i. p. 194.

† Hist. de l'Astronomie Ancienne, p. 185.

Homer,

Homer, when he conducts Ulysses to the shades, makes him set out from the island of Ea. Circe reigned in this island—Circe, a magician as well as goddess, had a two-fold power over Nature, over winds, and shades: she had none over Ulysses, whom she found it impossible to detain in her chains. It was in vain that love promised him immortality; the prince, impatient to return to Ithaca and his wife, to whom, however, he had not been at all times over faithful, rejected the precious boon. Anxious, with respect to the past, for his companions in arms and misfortunes, with respect to the future, for himself, it was necessary he should consult Teresias, and descend to the shades. The goddess is at pains to give him her best instructions. *Son of Laertes*, says she, *you have no occasion for the assistance of a guide: the breath of Borcas alone will conduct you. When you have traversed the ocean, you will find a commodious shore, you will see the woods of Proserpine full of barren trees: bring up to this beach, enter the gloomy palace of Pluto, at the place where Acheron receives into its channel Phlegethon and Cocytus, which is an efflux of the waters of the Styx. Proceed as far as the rocks where is the confluence of those two rivers, which roll down with a terrible noise—it is there thou shalt offer sacrifice for the invocation of the shades* *. The hero sets sail; his vessel ploughs the

* Homeri Odyss. lib. x.

sea

sea till the setting of the sun; and when night stretches her dark mantle over the earth, he arrives at the extremity of the ocean. It was the habitation of the Cimmerians, constantly involved in clouds, and wrapt up in profound obscurity. The sun never shines to them: whether he ascends the vault of heaven, tinging the stars with paleness, or sinks among the waves, leaving them to resume their lustre, an eternal night spreads her wings over this unfortunate race*. Thus, it is in the country of the Cimmerians, in the north of Greece, and not in Egypt, that Homer places the shades. But at what distance above the Grecian boundaries, at what height upon the globe, ought we to seek them? Rudbeck was strongly inclined to find them in his own country. The notion, however, of hell in Sweden, I confess, shocks me; inasmuch as I see there a just and well-informed king, whose sole desire is to render his people happy: I should rather have thought of going there in quest of the Elysian Fields.

Homer, properly understood, serves to decide the question. Hell is situated in the country of the Cimmerians. But you observe, that in order to come at it, Ulysses crosses the ocean: it cannot, then, be the Cimmerians in the neighbourhood of Greece that are here intended: this people dwell above the Euxine, and have no manner of connection with the great

* Homeri Odyss. lib. x.

sea. The return of Ulysses will throw light upon the subject. The hero goes back to Circe; and then embarking, after bidding her a last adieu, he sails, and is shipwrecked on the shores of the island Oyggia. This other island, infinitely remote from Greece, lies in the midst of the ocean*. You know, Sir, that, according to all the ancients, this island is the same with Atlantis; besides, it is inhabited by Calypso, daughter of the wise Atlas†. Each step we make leads us on, as you perceive, towards our object. In the solitude of the ocean, and in our way to hell, we fall in with the daughter of Atlas. The voyages of Ulysses are, doubtless, entirely fables; but the poet would necessarily adjust them to a certain scheme of geography, and to the traditional accounts he had received. Homer is in no haste to quit those parts. He proceeds to conduct Ulysses to Æolus: this god confines the winds in a bag, in order that the hero may enjoy a prosperous navigation‖. Now, is not this custom of selling, confining, and suffering the winds to escape by the undoing of knots, still found in Lapland¶? Homer was well

* Odyss. lib. i.

† Ibid. lib. xii.

‖ Ibid. lib. x.

¶ Renard says, that the Laplanders make three knots on a handkerchief: the first, upon being untied, gives a gentle breeze; the second a strong gale; the third a storm, or tempest.—Voy. en Laponie, œuvres de Renard, tom. i. p. 189.

acquainted

acquainted with those northern countries. Ulysses is next conveyed among the Lestrigons *; and the description of the country seems to intimate, that there summer has certain days of twenty-four hours; but Homer, in pointing to those regions in which hell is placed, does not specify the precise spot: he suffers doubt and uncertainty to hang over the mansions of the dead. It is unnecessary for us to say more on the subject than Homer: it is your province to imitate; it is mine to hear and follow him. We must not attempt to strip off the veil of antiquity entirely: this veil is overlaid with such weight of ages; it requires such repeated efforts to lift up only a corner of it—that it is very well if we can but discern something. We shall not presume to ascertain the actual position of hell, the place where those fables took their rise—it is sufficient for our purpose, that Homer shews it was in the north. It is worthy of remark, that he there places the woods of Proserpine, because the fable of this goddess refers to a climate where the night is of six months. It was a Hyperborean, named Abaris, who, transported on a golden arrow, carried the worship of Proserpine to Lacedemon, and built her temple in that city +. How comes Ceres to go to the north in quest of her daughter, if in those days the shades were not placed there? Pro-

* Odyss. lib. x.

+ Pausanias, lib. iii.

serpine

serpine was carried off in the fields of Enna, at the spot where the giants, who vomit their wrath from the mouth of Ætna, lie interred. The giants of Italy are mere copies of the old giants of Mount Caucasus, of the formidable Dives, who, in ancient times, were the terror of the world. Tartarus, into which Jupiter precipitated the Titans, must, doubtless, be a fable of the same country: it refers to, and is intimately connected with, that of the giants. But if men contrived a place of torment for the great oppressors of our race, they did not forget to assure virtue in a quiet retreat; the abode of peace, which we so vainly seek to obtain on earth. The imagination embellished it with every thing that can form the charm of the present life: there are verdant and flowery meadows, delicious fruits, ripened by a sky ever pure and serene, concerts under the sweet foliage of woods, and mixed with the converse of the wise, with freedom from every unsocial passion that might impair the relish of enjoyment. None ever experience there that devouring inquietude which disturbs inward peace, and repels each agreeable sensation. The sensual Mahomet appropriated all those Asiatic ideas: his paradise is nothing but a picture of the Elysian Fields: he saw there the Huris, ever young and never-fading virgins, only because he was a young man—whence I infer, that the inventors of the Elysian Fields had reached the period of old age: they

never

never thought of assigning a place in them to love, which, in their estimation, was neither a want nor a good thing of life.

The ancients frequently confounded the gardens of the Hesperides with the Elysian Fields. Now, inasmuch as we have found the Hesperides in the north, the Elysian Fields cannot fail to be there also. *The gods will send you,* says Proteus, *to Menelaus, to the Elysian Fields, at the extremity of the earth, where the wise Rhadamanthus lays down the law; where men lead a gentle and peaceful life; where they are not exposed to the rigours of winter, but where the air is uniformly refreshed by the soft breath of the zephyrs which set in from the ocean.* I can see, Sir, that you are at a loss to know the climates of the north, in this description: but if it be true that they are changed, it cannot be expected that you should know them. Besides, you are not unacquainted with your own prerogative: poets, when they please, banish winds and storms, regulate at will cold and heat, and the zephyrs are at their nod, to refresh any land they have a desire to make happy. The traditions followed by Homer, the first of Greek authors, suggest to me one fact, which appears to me to admit of no doubt; I mean, that the ancients placed the abode of the manes in the northern parts of the earth. The Elysian Fields serve to shew that there they were happy: Tartarus evinces to me that there they were also just. Observe, Sir, the

rivers

rivers that run into the shades: the first is Acheron, whose waters are bitter as grief, and whose name signifies anguish and lamentation. He was a son of the earth: Jupiter threw him headlong into hell, for having served to quench the thirst of the Titans *; the Titans, however, were giants, who inhabited the regions of the north. The next is Cocytus, which is only a marsh formed by tears; the Phlegethon, which rolls down in waves of fire; the Styx, where flow the waters of silence and death; the Lethe, more auspicious to mankind, whence they derive the waters of oblivion. Such, then, are the rivers of Tartarus. But, Sir, the names of those rivers are foreign to Greece and Egypt, as well as to Italy: their roots are discovered in the languages of the north. *Lata*, or *leta*, signifies to forget, to forsake †: hence came the river of forgetfulness. *Grondt*, which means bottom, with *a* prevative, was changed into *Agront*, a river without a bottom; whence came Acheron ‖. Cocytus may be derived from the root *kota*; a word which denotes a fountain boiling as it issues from

* L'Abbé Bannier, Mythol. tom. ii. p. 440.

† Rudbeck de Atlantica, tom. ii. p. 356.

‖ Ibid. tom. i. p. 310.

The *g*, or *k*, are two guttural articulations. The Greeks, in order to soften the word *agrondt*, only substituted one articulation for another, and made *akront*; then, by giving more effect to *scheva*, or *e* mute, which in pronounciation follows the consonant *k*, they made Akeron; and we, who represent this X by *ch*, write Acheron.

the

the earth*. Styx comes from *stegg*, or *stigg*, which signifies something unpleasant, disagreeable†. Phlegethon is compounded of *floga*, or *flogeld*, which is the word for a fiery meteor, and *thon*, signifying river. Thus *flogethon* means a river of fire‡. The famous lake of Avernus, which Virgil seems to have converted into a cave, the entrance to which is so easy, and egress so rare and difficult, because it is intended to be a representation of death, took its name from *aa*, which signifies water, and *werna*, which means shut up. We are to understand by *awern*, water in a stagnant state, and confined within borders, like that of a lake. Rudbeck informs us, that there is found, upon a mountain towards the sixty-third or sixty-fourth degree of latitude, a lake, which still bears the name of Avern §. The god Pluto has also a northern origin: he comes from the root *blota*, which signifies, to slaughter victims. The English blood means *sang*, and sometimes stands for murder. In the northern languages they still name the statues of Pluto, or Odin, *blotteric*, stained with human gore‖. The Greeks gave to this divinity the surname Hades; but they were entirely ignorant of the origin of many words they employed. Plutarch assigns to this sur-

* Rudbeck, tom. i. p. 310.
† Ibid. tom. ii. p. 356 and 414.
‡ Ibid. tom. ii. p. 603.
§ Ibid. tom. ii. p. 463.
‖ Ibid. tom. i. p. 728.

name

name a very strange etymology: he says, that Hades imports *something that pleases*, because Pluto, humane, wise, and rich, captivates the souls by civil words and gentle expostulations*. The Greeks were in the habit of perverting every thing. Is it, then, from sentiments of kindness that we are detained in the state of the dead? Does there not rise up behind us, the moment our eyes close upon the light, an insurmountable barrier? None were ever seen to tread back their steps; it is therefore necessity, force, and not obliging caresses or entreaties, which are the cause of our detention. Do you not think it somewhat pleasant, that they should make Pluto a *humane* divinity? A sovereign whose estates receive no population but from the loss and destruction of man, is surely any thing but a friend to humanity. We must not forget, that names belong to the countries where they have a certain meaning, where their value expresses the value of the thing named. Hades was an appellation of the god of death, *Ad*, and *Aïid*, and in Phœnician signifies loss, death. Here, then, is the source from which the Greeks derived it. But do you wish to ascend higher, even to its primitive origin?—you will find, in the northern languages, *auda*, or *oda*, to destroy; to ruin; *ode*, death—whence *Adin*, the god of death †, Adonis; that is to say, the

* De la Superstition, sec. 14.

† Rudbeck, tom. i. p. 727.

sun, dead, descended below the earth, and became the king of hell and of the shades *.

Charon's boat is an object of no small celebrity; we all dread the stern boatman, inflexible as fate, sulky as those he transports to the opposite shore. They were used in ancient times to pay a halfpenny for a passage and the freight of the boat, named barin †. Every service deserves a reward; every thing is paid for in life, and even after it. It was a custom in common to the Greeks, the Romans, and the Egyptians, to place in the mouth of the dead a piece of money, as Charon's fare. We must not forget, that they added to it a certificate of virtue, signed by the high priest. *I, the undersigned, attest, that such a one led a just life, and had good morals: I require that his manes may rest in peace.* I learn from Abbé Bannier, that the same custom of certificates is preserved in Muscovy ‖. As it will not be pretended that the Russians borrowed it from the Egyptians, it should seem that the customs of the south have their co-equals in the north: but this is not all. The word *barin* is valuable, inasmuch as it gives an indication of its origin. *Baar*, in the languages of the north, signify, in the languages of the north, a bier or barin ¶. It is in fact the vehicle which conveys

* Rudbeck, tom. ii. p. 585, 593.

† Diodorus Siculus, lib. i. sec. ii. sec. 34.

‖ Mythol. tom. ii. p. 436.

¶ Rudbeck, tom. i. p. 560.

us to our last abode; the fatal bark, which serves to transport us to the other world. Sir, a lie is always difficult to conceal; this word, which the Greeks and Romans left in it by mistake, restores the allegory of Charon to its true authors.

Why should not the case be the same as to the trials of the Egyptians, so useful and exemplary in their tendency? Individuals, kings themselves, were arraigned and judged before the national tribunal at the end of life. Every man passed his days, saying to himself, I shall be tried by my peers; the whole conduct of my life will be laid open: this is a formidable prospect to such as have a nice sentiment of honour. The usage of pleading for and against the dead, has only been retained in the ceremony of canonization; it is necessary to be pure and without reproach, in order to be admitted citizens of heaven. But the eternal fate of the herd of mankind, being secret, cannot serve the purpose of example. If it is useful to the individual who is gone, to have lived well, it is useful to the nation at large, that a public and rigorous trial should engage those who remain, to pursue the paths of virtue. This custom of the Egyptians, therefore, was extremely wise.

The nations of the north, Sir, had in like manner their celebrated trials. It has been usual to boast of their morals and love of justice; but before I apply it here, permit me to bring under your eye a

northern tradition. You know that Boreas was a king of the north, who carried off Orythia *: you will see in the Edda, which is a collection of northern traditions, that Boreas had three sons, *Atin*, *Vili*, and *Vei*. One day as they approached the border of the sea, they found two pieces of wood: they took one of them for the purpose of making it into a living being, whom they called *mann*. The first of Boreas's sons gave him life, the second intellect, the third hearing and seeing; and this being was the first man. The second piece of wood produced woman, of whom the sons of Boreas were not unmindful in the distribution of their gifts. The man was named *Asch*, the woman *Emla* †. Tacitus speaks of this *mann* as the author of the race of the Germans ‖. Nothing could be more natural than that this word should stand for man in general, since it was the name of him who served as the original stock ¶. Hesiod mentions something of the same kind; he says, that in the iron age, which preceded the age of silver, Jupiter made men of wood §, whose heart was harder than the diamond. They made no use of food; clad in armour of brass, they devoted themselves entirely to the pursuits of war.

* Strabo, Geog. lib. vii.
† Rudbeck, tom. i. p. 540.
‖ Manners of the Germans, c. 2.
¶ Rudbeck, tom. i. p. 458.
§ Wood of the ash tree.

Monstrous

Monstrous in size, endowed with extraordinary strength, their invincible hands, says the poet, hung down from their shoulders upon their robust limbs *. It is needless to make you remark, that this picture is evidently that of the giants, and that the materials of which they were formed assimilates them to man, created by the sons of Boreas; those wooden giants had their birth in the dominions of the king of the north.

The word *mann*, whether owing to the notion that man is a powerful being, or to those ideas of magnitude and force, came to be the term for power in general; hence they applied it as a title to their kings †; they named them *Minnur*, *Minner* ‖. One is apt to believe, Sir, that the Greeks thence took their Minos, the celebrated legislator and king of Crete, by inserting in this northern term a more sonorous and harmonious vowel: soft and melodious sounds were alone admissible into their nice and musical ears. Would you wish to have farther proof of it? It is this—In former times they used to celebrate in Sweden a great solemnity; they performed sacrifice in presence of the people, who had flocked to it from all quarters ¶. Homer will tell

* Hesiod, in oper. & dieb. v. 143.

† Rudbeck, tom. i. p. 277, 429, 470, 541.

‖ These changes of vowels are common in the Swedish language, ibid. p. 539.

¶ Rudbeck, tom. i. p. 262, 263.

you, that Minos once every nine years enjoyed a conversation with Jupiter, and received oracles from his mouth *. When the gods perjured themselves, after having sworn by the Styx, Jupiter sequestrated their divinity for nine years †. Why this term of nine years? Does not this period of disgrace recall to your mind the interval of trials in the north, which happened only once in nine years? Jupiter degraded the gods in one of those assemblies, and re-instated them in another. Those resemblances of usages, though remote, prove something, when joined to the evidence of etymology. Thus the north furnishes us with one of the judges, and that the most celebrated, of hell. But we shall find another of them still in the same extremity of the earth. *Rad* signifies a senator, an upright judge; *Radamen* a royal judge ‖; here then is Radamanthus, who was assessor to Minos in judging the shades: one cannot possibly mistake him. It has been truly oberved, that those fabulous names foreign to the Greek language, are natives of the north. The third judge, Eacus, has escaped our researches; but we cannot reasonably expect that those facts and traditions should not be imperfect; what they have lost, is to be considered as a proof of their antiquity; they could not be old if time had left them entire.

* Odyss. lib. xix.

† L'Abbé Banmer, Mythol. tom. ii. p. 441.

‖ Rudbeck, tom. i. p. 546.

We are in condition to shew upon what grounds Minos, Eacus, and Radamanthus received their appointment as judges of the shades: our authority is Plutarch. It was a law in the time of Saturn, that all men who passed their lives in a strict observation of justice and the laws, should, after death, go to inhabit the fortunate islands, far from every evil, and in a state of eternal felicity. The wicked and impious, reserved for the dungeons of supreme justice, were sent to Tartarus. Under the reign of Saturn, and in the beginning of that of Jupiter, it was a maxim, that the living should judge their fellow men threatened with decease, or arrived at the last period of old age. But the living will always find witnesses favourable to their interest; they appeared at the tribunal attended by their friends and relations; there they displayed all the pride of family and pomp of riches: kings were still surrounded by the grandeur of their rank, and found shelter under the influence of their power. It is in the nature of man to be afraid of man, as long as he lives. The decisions given on those occasions were not always according to justice. Pluto, sovereign of the fortunate islands, complained that they sent him subjects who were unworthy of those mansions of peace. Jupiter felt that the source of seduction is in the human passions: the passions plead, and the passions decide. *Such are the vestments*, says Plutarch,

which corrupt the judges. Jupiter, therefore, ordained, that thenceforth the judges should be naked; that is to say, dead, and stript of frail humanity: their tribunal was transferred to the other world, in order that, souls alone sitting in judgment upon souls, their decrees might be guided by justice and impartiality. Jupiter committed the charge of this office to his children; Minos and Radamanthus were for Asia, Eacus for Europe *; Asia, as being the eldest, and most populous at the time, was treated with higher favour. But who is it who acted as judge for Egypt and Africa? Would it not be singular, if those fables took their rise in the manners of the Nile and laws of the Egyptians, that Africa alone should be forgotten? A small circumstance frequently serves to discover the truth. You can well believe the high antiquity of those ideas, and you can name an infinity of countries which could not possibly produce them. Egypt was utterly unknown to the authors of those institutions. What then are the nations of antiquity that knew nothing of Egypt? They were neither the Romans nor the Greeks, nor even the Phœnicians. The authors of those institutions, who might be supposed to forget Egypt, who never heard of it by report, were a people at the end of the earth; men who existed before Egypt, and who issued from

* Condolence sent to Apollonius upon the death of his son, sec. 30.

their

their distant retreat in order to found their empire and their laws.

You see, Sir, that human tribunals were the models upon which those of the shades were formed; you see also, that they were instituted under Saturn, when laws were first promulgated, in times celebrated for the reign of justice and happiness *. You have seen that Saturn was the brother of Atlas; and since Plutarch refers those institutions to his reign, and to the beginning of that of Jupiter, it is plain that the justice of that reign had served afterwards to regulate that of a future life; it is plain that those people, tried in their lifetime by their fellow men, were of the race of Atlas; they inhabited the Atlantis, or some neighbouring and western country which formed the kingdom of Saturn. This same Saturn erected fortresses upon the mountains; whence high grounds in general were called Saturnian †. Thus we are uniformly led back to the mountains, which were the theatre of so many wars, and which men barricaded and fortified with all their art ‖.

Let us listen to Plato, as he relates the instructions which he had received from a philosopher: in ancient times all information was transmitted from one one old man to another. This philosopher had been

* *Supra*, p. 59.
† *Supra*, p. 58.
‖ *Supra*, p. 196 and 216.

instructed

instructed himself by his grandfather, who, at the memorable expedition of Xerxes against Greece, was dispatched to Delos, in order to defend that island, celebrated and venerable for its having given birth to the gods. This is a circumstance, however, which we do not believe; we well know that the gods are much more ancient than the Greeks: their islands were still uninhabited when all those mortal and false gods were in existence. But, in short, this grandfather found in the island of Delos tables of brass, brought from the Hyperborean mountains; and he read upon them a description of hell, the doctrine of the immortality of the soul when disengaged from bodily confinement, and descended under the earth to the realms of Pluto; realms secured by gates of iron, where the first objects that present themselves are Acheron and Cocytus, and on the other side Minos and Radamanthus*, who administer justice in the field of truth †. I have no occasion to point out to you, Sir, the different conclusions which one might draw from this singular passage. You perceive that the knowledge of the Greeks was of foreign extraction; the doctrine of the soul's immortality, and a future state, was evidently borrowed: but as to the place whence that

* Eacus is not noticed in this passage of Plato. This third judge of the shades might very probably have been added since.

† Plato, *in Axiocho*. Rudbeck, tom. i. p. 536.

know-

knowledge originally came, I ask you, whether it is possible to bring clearer evidence than that of this philosopher cited by Plato? He read upon those tables, which were the production of a northern people, the complete history of those institutions which we find in the northern parts of the earth; he sees upon them the names of rivers and characters, of which language still preserves the signification and roots. Add to this, Sir, that this island of Delos, which gave birth to the gods in Greece, was evidently the manufacture of national vanity: it represents a more ancient and extensive island, which both Pliny and Diodorus Siculus place in the north seas. The one names it Basilea, or Royal Island *; the other gives it the name of Oserićta †; and this term, as if intended to confirm their testimony, signifies, in the languages of the north, *island of gods, kings*; *royal island of the gods* ‖. Thus all that the Greeks maintained respecting this island of Delos, honoured by the birth of the gods, belongs to the island Basilea, which is situated in the north seas.

Plutarch thought in ancient times as I think at this day, Sir, that Homer wished to place hell about the North Pole: he conceived it was the darkness of those regions which determined his choice ¶.

* Diodorus Siculus, tom. ii. p. 225.

† Plin. lib. xxxvii. c. 2.

‖ Rudbeck, tom. i. p. 462, 464.

¶ Plutarch, *in Mario*, sec. 2.

But

But Homer was nearer the original sources of antiquity; he was consequently much better informed than Plutarch; it was no motive of suitableness or propriety, but a deference for existing traditions, that was actually his guide. This predilection was not a result of his own genius, he only followed the universally received opinion of his time. All the poets and authors of antiquity referred Tartarus, the Elysian Fields, the garden of the Hesperides, the birth of gods and heroes, the abode of the manes, to the end of the world, and to a country of darkness. Besides, was it Homer or any other of the Greek poets who introduced into the northern languages the names of the rivers, of the judges and gods of hell? The whole of those names were aliens in Greece *; nor did the Greeks do more at the time of their adoption than to soften their sounds. They received them from the Pelasgi; and the name of this people serves to shew that they were in a wandering, that is to say, emigrating state; it was to the descent and irruptions of men towards the Equator, that the earth was indebted for her population and science. I have the authority of Plato for this conclusion, since, agreeably to a certain tradition, he informs us, that there had been seen at Delos tables of brass brought from a country of the north, on which was read a description of hell. Is

* Herod. lib. ii.

not

not this as much as to tell us, that the Delian tables were the source whence those ideas had been derived? What motive could induce him so formally to contradict the pretensions of Grecian vanity, if he had not been forced to it by a sense of truth? I appeal to Plato, a disciple of the Egyptians; I submit to the decision of a Greek, who bears witness against both the Greeks and the Egyptians.

I foresee an objection which will not escape you. *There was a time*, you will tell me, *when the nations of the Temperate Zone had no idea that the earth was inhabited beyond the fiftieth degree of northern latitude. I can excuse the Greeks for having placed the Cimmerian darkness precisely at the fiftieth degree**. But, Sir, the Greeks, ignorant as they were, made a distinction between the Cimmerians and the Hyperboreans. The Cimmerians lived, in fact, about the Palus Meotis, between forty-five and fifty degrees of latitude. This people, according to my principles †, ought to have descended the Wolga, then the Tanais (at present the Don), which discharges itself into the sea of Azof. If you ascend those rivers till you get to their source, you will reach the point from which they set off. *The Cimmerians*, says Plutarch, *made but a small part of a great nation expelled by the Scythians, and who halted near the Tanais, after tra-*

* Lettres sur l'Origine des Sciences, p. 12.

† *Supra*, p. 256.

versing

versing Asia. That warlike multitude formerly dwelt upon the borders of the ocean, amidst inaccessible forests, and under a gloomy sky: there the Pole is almost vertical over the head: long nights and long days divide the year *. Thus we see, that there were Cimmerians in Asia: as soon as they left it, they were found near the Bosphorus; and when those barbarians discovered the way to Italy, they appeared also about Baiæ and Pouzocco †. It is easy to imagine, then, how it happens that people of the same name may present themselves in so many different parts of the earth, and by what means historians came to be guilty of so many errors and misapplications.

But it was not among this people that the Greeks acquired the ideas they had of the Hyperboreans. Herodotus says, there is a people who sleep for six months; because, probably, he supposes, that when it is night, of whatever length it may be, a man has nothing better to do than to sleep. The Greeks were not ignorant that there was a climate in the north where the year consisted but of a day and a night of six months ‖. *The natives of this climate (the Hyperboreans) sow in the morning, reap at noon, get in the harvest in the evening, and lay it up in caverns during night* ¶. Is it possible to paint with more truth,

* Plutarchus, *in Mario.*

† L'Abbé Bannier, Mythol. tom. ii. p. 418.

‖ Pliny, lib. iv. c. 12.

¶ Solin Polyhistor, c. 16.

the

the life of a people whose time is divided into large intervals, and to whom Nature has denied the incessant vicissitudes of day and night? She gives them at once the light, at once the darkness, of the year: one half of the solar revolution is intended for labour, the other is devoted to rest and listless indolence; and if they retired to their caverns in winter, it was that they might the less feel the absence of the sun. Without him, heaven is but a dismal void; when he is gone, it is unworthy of their regards. Besides, the description of the Hyperboreans bears no resemblance to the borders of the Palus Meotis. Beyond the Gauls, in the ocean, and on the side of the north, there is, according to Hecate *, an island larger than Sicily: there is the habitation of the Hyperboreans, who, as their name imports, live beyond the climate and the empire of Boreas, whence the north wind sends its hoar-frosts over the earth. This is the birth-place of Latona, and of her son Apollo. This people were at all times in amity with the Greeks, and particularly with those of Athens and Delos. We shall have something to say, perhaps, of this intercourse between the Greeks and Hyperboreans; but, in the mean time, Sir, you will not be astonished to find among the islanders of Delos, tables of brass, written in the Hyperborean language; and when Plato assures you that they contained a description of the

* Diodorus, tom. i. p. 307.

shades,

shades, you will not doubt that they were placed in the country of the Hyperboreans, and in the northern parts of the earth. It appears evident to me, that the parent country of those ideas is in that region of the globe. It is no doubt possible, that, in times of ignorance, the Greeks might confound places, and assign the long reign of darkness among the Cimmerians to the fiftieth degree of latitude. I excuse them, as well as you, for this mistake; but it does not alter the true state of things: it does not say that they were not informed, though in a very vague and obscure manner, respecting the phenomena peculiar to the climates nearest the Pole: it does not say, that it was not in those very climates where the most learned among the Greeks sought for Tartarus and the Elysian Fields.

The manes, or shades of the dead, are a certain remains or residue of man. It seems next to impossible, that they should have received this name but in a country where he himself had the appellation of *mann*. Those relations are of too impressive a nature not to be felt, and the inference from them appears evident to me. The word *mann* is exclusively confined to the northern languages *: hence I conclude, that the idea of manes, like that of Tartarus and the Elysian Fields, are of a northern descent, and

* The Laplanders at this day term *manes*, what remains of a man after death.—See Voyages de Renard en Laponie, tom. i. p. 184.

that

that all the nations who, without a revelation, have attained to the belief of a future life, have their ancestry in that part of the world. But you will ask me, how men could deceive themselves in this manner, incorporate a gross error with a profound and masterly idea, and give a material and terrestrial locality to places which they shall never see but intellectually, and after we have taken our leave of the world? It would be little short of madness, it should seem, to place them in regions we know, frequent, and where nobody ever saw any thing of the kind. The reason of this is simple—the whole is the result of a natural process of the mind. Those institutions did not originate in the spot to which they refer: that species of geography has its elements in the powers of memory: the changes took place when it came to be transmitted under the veil of tradition. Regret changes and embellishes every thing: it is the leading principle in the history of metamorphoses. The Elysian Fields have precisely the same origin with the golden age. When men quit their native country, where society has been formed and established, they feel a sentiment of regret for the places they leave behind them. They will say to their children, We dwelt in former times, we or our ancestors, in a delightful country, upon a fruitful soil, and under a serene sky, which never looked but upon virtuous men; for the execution of just, though severe, laws,

restrained and punished the wicked.—By and bye, as death embraces all without distinction of time or place, just as the same shade involves every thing that springs from time and space, pointing to an old man who had just finished the career of life, they would say, He is gone to join his fathers, to enter with them into the enjoyment of peace, and to receive that felicity he has so well deserved: the wicked never return thither, but to suffer the rigid infliction of the laws.—Those ideas often repeated, became engraven in the minds of succeeding generations; and, in the end, men confounded a future life, the place where God rewards and punishes, with their primitive and regretted country, where innocence of manners was equalled only by the severity of the laws.

This origin of the fable of hell seems to me completely admissible; inasmuch as it is founded in a high degree of philosophical probability; but it rests, besides, upon three facts, which seem to put it beyond a doubt. The poets, as well as the historians, whom we consider as the depositaries of ancient traditions, have asserted in their writings, that the seat of the shades is in the northern parts of the earth. Still this might give rise to some doubt: one might be tempted even to believe, that this choice in them originated in a certain idea of fitness or congruity; but the northern and living languages present you still

with

with names, or the roots of unknown names, absolutely foreign to Greece. Surely Greece was not at pains to seek out barbarous words and sounds, in order to express the ideas of her own invention. she was even obliged to soften and qualify those terms when she came to naturalize them. We say that chemistry came from Arabia, because its technical phrases are in the Arabian language. Astronomy was taught us by the Greeks and those same Arabians, as we see by the ancient dictionary of that science. The science of the shades belongs, in the same manner, to the people whose language produced the names of the gods, the judges, and rivers of the shades: they could have no motive for adopting the words, but that they were inseparable from the ideas. Those two facts, or rather proofs, might certainly suffice; but history shews us clearly, that in all times the south has been over-run by the natives of the north; in all times riches have held out a bait or temptation to poverty. You see that Europe derived its population from those invasions; that all the nations of Asia found their way over Caucasus; and that they endeavoured to fortify themselves against the tribes who wished to pursue the same route. It should seem, that there is a certain propensity which draws men towards the Equator:—this is no other than the necessary effect of the attractive influence of heat and fertility, or, in other words, the strong

impulse of want and self-interest. This fact of history connects with the two former: it explains the reason why the fables of the north, as well as certain terms of the northern languages, are found in the south: men, words, and ideas, followed the same course.

If Phaëton fell, his fall did not make him light in Italy; it drowned him in the waters of the Eridanus, which discharges itself into the north seas. You have seen Prometheus directing Hercules to the garden of the Hesperides, by the way of Caucasus: the name and history of Hercules naturalize him in the north; the Hesperides, the daughters of Atlas, are of the same country. Calypso, of seducing memory, who, during seven years, retained Ulysses in her toils*; who made him unmindful of his conjugal fidelity; who, in short, practised the same arts, but failed of success, upon Telemachus—this same Calypso was the daughter of the great Atlas. The woods of Proserpine, the Elysian Fields, the tribunal of Rhadamanthus, are in the north, and in the empire of Saturn, brother of Atlas. Here, then, the memory of the Atlantides revives, and here are fables which are of their invention. We have not only seen that they passed Caucasus, we have found them again in Scythia, but the present fables present them more in the back ground, and towards the darkness

* Odyss. lib. vii.

of

of the Pole. I dare not yet thence conclude that the Atlantides are natives of the north; an idea that seems not a little bold and extraordinary. You asked intelligence of my lost people, and you will be satisfied with nothing less than historical evidence. I cannot tell whether you will accept those fables as historical documents. And why not? Have you any difficulty to admit, that the daughters should be of the family of their mother? Man never lies merely for the sake of lying: he sometimes mends the truth a little, when he thinks it is not sufficiently interesting or agreeable: it may remain somewhat less pure, but it is still truth: it has acquired charms, but it has not lost all its titles. It appears evident to me, that those fables have an affinity with the north, by the roots of the northern languages. Were they but play-things of the imagination, still they shew us the cradle round which they amused their authors. My early suspicions acquire strength: I feel that I get on towards conviction. Though I am not without anxiety while you honour me with your attention, and should not forgive myself were I to lead you wrong, I must endeavour to avail myself of those advantages, which the situation to which I have conducted you puts in my power. Arrived in countries between the Pole and Caucasus, whence we have seen all the nations of Asia descend, we are at a small distance from the source of the human race.

This very important truth ought not to remain barren. I entreat you will not abandon me; and if the people of Atlantis are not a chimera, we are on the point of discovering their residence.

I am, with respect, &c.

TWENTY-THIRD LETTER TO M. DE VOLTAIRE.

[Discovery of the country of the Atlantides.]

Paris, 5th May, 1778.

PLATO spake to the Athenians, Sir, of the best and most beautiful generation of men that ever existed. There escaped of them but a feeble seed, of whom the Atlantides were the descendants. He adds, that Athens alone repelled the efforts of a mighty power that issued from the Atlantic sea*. I can easily believe that there was as much of politeness as of truth in those complimentary phrases; but, in short, flattery, and above all, the flattery of a philosopher, should contain something of the truth. From this I conclude, that there existed in Greece a confused and vague tradition of some such extraction. They attributed the origin of the nation to an ancient people who inhabited a part of the world then unknown. For my own better information, and in order to have more knowledge of the subject than the Greeks themselves, it is necessary that I should

* *Supra*, p. 21.

bring together and compare certain traditions. I have always observed light and truth result from such comparisons, by the links of a mutual dependency. The Greeks valued themselves upon their having had an uninterrupted intercourse with the Hyperboreans. It is said that they used to visit them, and left among them presents charged with Greek inscriptions. The Hyperboreans, on their part, employed the Scythian Abaris as their ambassador: they conveyed annually the first fruits of their harvest. Three or four young and virgin females were charged with the commission, escorted by a hundred young men. Those virgins met with some accident by the way, and they ceased to send them in future; but they contrived to pass the presents from one people to another, and from hand to hand, all the way to Delos*. The Hyperborean tables which were seen in that island, according to the testimony of Plato†, lead me to place confidence in those facts. But the route which was pursued by those offerings intrusted to the probity of primitive ages, is very remarkable. Pausanias informs us, that the Hyperboreans conveyed them to the Arimaspes; they to the Issedons; the Issedons to the Scythians, who had them transmitted into Europe‖. Those

* Banier, Mythol. tom. i. p. 665.

† *Sofis*, p. 366.

‖ Banier, tom. i. p. 666.

three

three people are evidently tribes who inhabited Tartary *, between Caucasus and the Frozen Ocean. It is therefore with good reason that Diodorus Siculus placed the Hyperboreans towards the north, and in an island of that sea †. Have you much faith, Sir, in those virgins and offerings, who make so long a journey, and who repeat it from year to year? At a time when communication was difficult, this tour, of from seven to eight hundred leagues, would require at least a year; the messengers must have been constantly on the road: one should think, the first fruits would be somewhat old and stale by the time of their arrival. I explain all this in a manner extremely simple, leaving out of the account the long journies, which are entitled to but little credit. Those reciprocal visits seem to be the effect of contiguity of situation: they are people connected by friendship and consanguinity, who cultivate the habits of peace and amity, and once a year renew their alliance. The Greeks must have shifted from one place to another, like all other nations of the world; why might they not have been in the neighbourhood of the Hyperboreans? They once bore the name of the Pelasgi. The Pelasgi might have borrowed their name from a sea, called, by way of eminence, *Pelagus*, or the great

* See the position of those nations of Tartary, in the Ancient Geography of M. Danville, tom. ii. p. 321, 323, 324.

† *Supra*, p. 374.

sea,

sea," of which Plato speaks, when treating of the island Atlantis. The Pelasgi removed to a distance, but their intercourse continued for a certain time. When, at length, distance and length of time put an end to it, its remembrance was still preserved; and they boasted of events long passed, as of things of yesterday. The tables in the Hyperborean language, which contained their common history and fables, were carried and deposited in Delos, which they agreed should represent the island of the gods, which they had left in Asia. I have no other evidence to lay before you, Sir, in favour of this opinion, but its own probability; but its conformity with the facts I have stated, and with others which might still be added. But without this antient vicinity of the Greeks and Hyperboreans, whence could the Greeks derive, at the time of their first settlement, at a time when individuals travelled almost none, so much knowledge of the phenomena of the long days and nights of the northern latitudes, of the darkness which broods over a certain part of the year? It was the instruction received in their infancy, and near the place of their birth, which they still preserved in the prime of life. Orpheus and Homer sung those traditions, which their beautiful verses have kept alive, and transmitted to posterity.

This island of the Hyperboreans recalls to my recollection that of Panchaia, of which Euhemerus

has enumerated so many wonders; where they found written on a pillar, in letters of gold, the achievements of Uranus, Saturn, and Jupiter; that is to say, of the chiefs of the Atlantides*. It suggests also those sacred islands to the north of England, where Plutarch places the abode of demons and demi-gods†. The island Basilea, on whose shores they gather amber, and where Phaëton fell from his car‖; the island *Oscirta*, or the island of the Gods¶; the island of Happiness, likewise called *Elixoia*; the island Atlantis of Plato; in fine, the island Ogygia, over which Calypso reigned, and which, according to Homer, and all the ancients, was the same with Atlantis.

Do you not think it somewhat singular, Sir, that the ancients should have had such a passion for islands? It should seem, that there every thing that is sacred, great, and venerable, was displayed. Why did the inhabitants of a continent confer this distinction upon islands, in preference to their own continental situation? If a man were disposed to decorate the antiquity of his family by fables, he would bestow that celebrity upon his native, rather than upon a strange, country. One would never sacrifice the

* Diodor. de Sic. tom. ii. p. 263, 339.
† Oracles which have ceased, sec. 13.
‖ Diodor. tom. ii. p. 225.
¶ Plin. lib. xxxvii. c. 2.

great

great masses of the earth, which figure like mistresses of the globe, to little appendages, to lands isolated, and detached like islands. I am inclined to believe, that this passion was not wholly a matter of choice. Those traditions were not the creatures of the imagination; they had a real foundation: self-love would have moulded them differently, but for the obstinacy of truth. When you see a man become rich, and raised in the world, send to examine the deeds and titles of his family in a village—do you not conclude that there he had his origin? Well, then, this village so mean, compared with a great capital, is, in the present case, that same island which, in a certain degree, peopled the main lands: as to the family titles of the human race, they are the traditions which had their origin in those sacred islands. Islanders would have occasion for some sort of vessels, in order to reach our old continent: hence the origin of navigation. The Greeks pretended that Minos was the first to construct a fleet, and take possession of the sea *. You have already seen who was this Minos (judge of Hell), whom the Greeks describe as the legislator of Crete. Minos was a native of the north: the inventor of navigation meets us in the same quarter. You will soon be of the same opinion on this point. My first reasons are those which I have already stated, and which go to shew that the

* Thucyd. Bell. Pelop. lib. i.

idea

idea of extensive navigations originated within the small bounds of a solitary island*. To these reasons I would add the absolute necessity of this resource, in order to get upon the continent of Asia, to which, as you will soon see, they made good their passage. A fable already inserted in those Letters †, also cited by the Edda and Hesiod, serves to confirm this origin. In the north, the ash-tree is named *astar*. In ancient times, the arrows, swords, and every kind of offensive weapon, as well as the shipping of the north, consisted of this species of wood. Sailors were named *astemann*, men of wood ‖: they disembarked from their floating hovels, which were built of ash, with arms made of the same materials. The fable says that they were born in the forests, and that the gods formed them of the ash-tree. It was the circumstance, then, of their arriving in ships, that led them to invent the history of the sons of Boreas, who manufactured men from a piece of wood; and, for the same reason, Hesiod, when he gives to his giants a heart of diamond, says that they were formed of wood, and particularly of the ash. Nothing but the truth, couched under the veil of those allegories, could possibly thus refer to the same source, fables so extremely different. You know,

* *Supra*, p. 92.

† *Supra*, p. 357.

‖ Rudbeck, tom. i. p. 543.

Sir,

Sir, that the vestiges of the origin of things are preserved in the etymology of languages. A science must be considered as the produce of that country where the technical terms it makes use of took their rise. This is a principle not to be disputed. You have seen, that the same word which in Greece and Italy used to signify ship, still retains the same signification in the languages of the north. In those languages, the term *ship* still denotes the same object. This word is preserved in the English language; and is found at the extremity of the earth, among the Kourilles, to signify a canoe *. It is impossible that those two nations could have a common origin any where but in the north; and agreeably to the principle I have laid down, since it was there they got the names ship and canoe, which means a ship in the earliest stage of ship-building, it must have been there also that they acquired the idea of navigation. And do you not perceive, Sir, that they from whom we borrowed it—I mean the Phœnicians—those bold navigators, who astonished the world by their extensive voyages, who preserved the worship of the sun and the memory of all the chiefs of the Atlantides †, having, no doubt, descended along with them from Caucasus, and were, perhaps, no other than the Atlantides themselves, under a different name, had, as well

* *Supra*, p. 304.

† *Supra*, Letter Fifteenth.

as

as them, the place of their nativity in the north, whose languages point out to us the origin of navigation? We have no reason to be surprized that in their temple of the sun, there should be constantly two pillars, one sacred to fire, or the sun, whose absence is often felt in cold countries, and the other to the wind, which conducted them to the continent, and a more hospitable climate *. But this point of common descent of the English, the Phœnicians, and Kourilles, we ought to place as high in respect of time as in latitude upon the globe. The invention of the science of navigation must undoubtedly be of great antiquity. The Orientalists seem, however, to have preserved some tradition of it: the Chinese have their *Peirun*, who was beloved of the gods, and who saved his life in a bark in the emergency of an inundation †; the ancient inhabitants of Sweden have their *Belgemer*, who, with his wife, was preserved in a boat on a similar occasion. The place from which they made their escape, seems then to be situated between the northern parts of Sweden, and the northern parts of China and the Corea; it ought to correspond to the middle point of Asia. We are under no necessity of referring these traditions to the universal deluge; they may as aptly enough belong to local inundations. The Tartars

* *Supra*, p. 110.

† Kempfer, Hist. de Japan. lib. iii. c. 3.

say,

say, that their forefathers, when navigating the lake Kytai, where the river Oby takes its rise, discovered at a distance, in the lake, large buildings, partly under the surface of the water *. This serves to shew, that that part of the world may have been subjected to some particular inundation. The Greeks, the greatest thieves of antiquity, who took every thing to themselves, fables, the histories of nations, heroes, and the inventors of science, might easily appropriate also the great catastrophies of Nature, which were deeply engraven in the memory of mankind. *Nothing is so obscure*, says Abbé Bannier, *as the history of Ogyges, and the deluge, which happened under his reign. Was this prince a native of Greece or a stranger? At what time did he live? What are we to understand by the deluge of Ogyges? Here are three questions which are not to be resolved* †. Since M. Abbé Bannier declines the task, I shall take the liberty to state my conjectures.

Diodorus Siculus, Sir, informs us, that the Titans, in other words, the giants, were the children of Uranus and the earth, in the country of the Atlantis ‖. Phericides, a Greek historian, says that the Hyperboreans were of the race of the Titans §; consequently, Hyperborea was the country of the giants.

* Pierre Begeron, Traité des Tartares, 1634, p. 217.

† Mythol. tom. iii. p. 32.

‖ *Supra*, p. 53.

§ Olaus Rudbeck, tom. ii. p. 18.

But

But who were those giants or Titans? Three of them were named Cottus, Briareus, Gyges; they had a hundred hands and fifty heads; they dwelt in a dark country, and afterwards Tartarus, into which they were thrown headlong by Jupiter *; they were the accomplices of Saturn, who wanted to dethrone his son, in order to resume the government himself. Thus the reign of Saturn could be nowhere but in the regions where we are actually placed; they are the seat of the Elysian Fields, which were within the bounds of his empire †. Dionysius, the geographer, says, that the great sea in the north of Asia, was called the Frozen, or Saturnian Ocean ‖. Orpheus and Pliny observe, that the natives gave it the same name ¶; it is there, then, we are to place the giants, the confederates of Saturn, who afterwards were made to share in his imprisonment. Those hundred hands and fifty heads, which only serve to denote strength and prudence, suggested to the imagination the figure of the god Fo, as well as of Indian divinities, whose idols are frequent in Tartary, India, China, and Japan. I see clearly, Sir, that this formidable giant Gyges inhabited the island Atlantis, which is the same with that of Ogygia. *Oia*,

* Hesiod. Theog. v. 734. Rudbeck, tom. i. p. 357.

† *Supra*, p. 362.

‖ Denis, v. 35.

¶ Orph. v. 1077. Pliny, lib. iv. c. 16. Rudbeck, tom. i. p. 461, 513.

in the northern languages signifies island *. I thence conclude, that Ogygia is the island of Gyges, and that the submersion of that island, in whole or in part, is the deluge of Ogyges.

But the greatest of all the inundations of Atlantis, was an inundation of human beings, who seem to have issued from this island at different periods. I do not allude either to Tamerlane or Gengiskan, or to those swarms of barbarians who deluged the Roman empire; I refer to irruptions much more ancient, to the grand expeditions of Bacchus and Osiris, or rather to those of a singular and renowned personage who bore both those names. By Osiris is meant the sun; and though Bacchus be the god of wine, he is also the emblem of that star which ripens the grape. This I very readily believe; but the travels of Bacchus, his incursions into India, those of Osiris into Egypt, the nations they instructed, the cities they built, cannot possibly be a mere allegory. Though the whole of this history contains things evidently of a physical nature, the founding of cities, with many other facts, must be historical. It may perhaps be possible to separate the one from the other by conjectures highly probable. I conceive that tribes going from north to south in quest of the sun, marched under the conduct of a chief; this chief was named Bacchus by

* Rudbeck, tom. i. p. 468.

the

the Indians and Greeks, Osiris by the Egyptians. When the imagination wished to blend its own imagery with the tale told by tradition, they had observed that the sun withdrew from one pole to direct his course towards the other, and seemed to descend from the north as he approached the Equator; they would say, that he marched in the heavens as men had marched upon earth; and the chief of a memorable expedition became the emblem of the solar motion. A sedentary people would never have acquired this idea; nor would their traditions have suggested allegories applicable to the travels of the sun; it was because they had travelled themselves, and in the direction of the Poles, that they thought of connecting the motion of this star with their own history. We can have no doubt that Bacchus descended from the north, inasmuch as we observe that his worship is celebrated by women, crowned with ivy, in islands of a higher latitude than Great Britain *. The Greeks never conveyed into those islands, where the vine has long ceased to grow, the worship of the son of Semele; there Bacchus is in his native land. Ausonius, when speaking of the sun, says it expressly †. *The Egyptians*, says he, *call him Osiris; in the island of Ogygia he receives the name of Bacchus.* Here then we

* Dionys. in Perieg. v. 572. Rudbeck, tom. ii. p. 367.

† Auson. Epig. 30.

 have

have the true native country of Bacchus, namely, the island of Ogygia; it was thence that the human swarm set out, who made a descent into India under the conduct of Bacchus, and invaded Egypt under that of Osiris. You will not imagine, Sir, that I would have you regard this expedition as having been accomplished at once; I am not fond of long journies; so very large a portion of the globe is not to be traversed all in a breath. I conceive that there would be certain pauses and intervals: at last, when they had chosen a fixed and permanent habitation, the mind lost all notion of dates, stages, and successive settlements; they attended to nothing but the point of their departure and that of their arrival; and the march of several centuries, begun under one chief, and terminated under another, became, in their minds, one individual journey, the honour of which was attributed to the first. The Atlantides were another swarm, which, issuing from the island Ogygia, spread itself over Egypt, Phœnicia, Asia Minor, Greece, and Italy. You will tell me, Sir, that the island Ogygia, or, according to Plato, the island Atlantis, lying beyond the Pillars of Hercules, the Atlantides must have passed before them, in order to arrive at the countries I have mentioned: this is precisely the reason why authors have placed Atlantis in the Canary isles, and in the vicinity of Cadiz, which contained the temple and pillars sacred

cred to Hercules. But neither was this temple, nor those sacred pillars, confined to this individual place. Let us recall to mind the name which they bore; a name which denotes limits or boundaries *. They served to mark the stages and limits of the travels of Hercules; they erected pillars, and used to say Hercules came even there. At intervals, becoming gradually shorter, in each settlement of the same people, at each stage of travels, which, as we just observed, lasted for several ages, they set up new ones of a similar kind. As often as the people again set forward, Hercules resumed his travels, and arrived at new limits. Tyr, as we formerly mentioned †, had a temple which contained a couple of pillars similar to those of Cadiz; this, then, was one of the intervals in Hercules's travels. His travels were probably marked by many others, of which no notice is taken in history; perhaps some of those columns have been overthrown by time, which has effaced their remembrance. As we find the traces of Hercules in Scythia, he must no doubt have had pillars in that country; and if it had not been so cruelly desolated, if that country ever had historians, we should have known something of them. Tacitus speaks on the part of the inhabitants of the north; he says that Drusus attempted to penetrate into the

* *Supra*, p. 108.
† *Supra*, p. 108.

ocean by the mouths of the Rhine, and that he learned from report, that in that quarter might be seen pillars of Hercules. Whether it be, in short, says Tacitus, that Hercules had actually been there, or that we have a propensity to attribute to him every thing that is great and extraordinary *, we may naturally suppose there were pillars in the north of Asia, since Drusus found them in the north of Europe; indeed those same pillars, erected in some island of the ocean, were equally in the north of the one and of the other quarter of the world.

The giants, whom the Greeks represent as buried under mountains, vomiting flames from the mouths of Vesuvius and Ætna; the Titans thrown into hell by Jupiter, shut up in prison with Saturn in a country of darkness, and in the northern extremity of the earth; are they not the same giants against whom the ancestors of the Persians so often fought in the defiles of Caucasus, and whose memory is still preserved even in India †? Are they not the same with the malificent Dives, whom Huschenk and Feridoun bound hand and foot in the caverns of those mountains? Here then we have another irruption; those giants are but one and the same race of men, natives of the north, who travelled towards the south, and who contended for permission to pass the moun-

* Mores Germanorum, c. 34, sec. 2.

† Lettres sur l'Origine des Sciences, p. 110.

tains

tains. These traditions, which seem to refer the origin of every thing to certain northern isles *, when united to those which mark the veneration of mankind for mountains, seem to trace out the progress of a branch of the human race, who issued from some island of the north, and were long detained among the mountains, before they could descend into the beautiful countries which they presently inhabit.

I shall take the liberty to state, Sir, one fact, which appears to me decisively to mark that line of march, as well as that origin. In the Indian and Malabar languages, the word *div* signifies island. The Portuguese possess in India, in the kingdom of Guzarate, a city named *Diu*, because it is built in an island. This signification is evident in the names of the *Maldive* and *Laquedive* islands. The island of Ceylon, among the Arabians is called *Serandib*, word for word, isle of Seran; for the Arabians, having no *v* in their language, substituted a *b* in its place †. When I thus find the memory of the giants preserved in India, as well as in Persia, am I not at liberty to infer, Sir, that the word *dive*, employed by the one and the other nation, has the same source; that the giants of India are no other than the Dives of Persia; and that these last bore a name

* *Supra*, p. 389.

† Voyages des Anciens Arabes, publiés par l'Abbé Renaudot, p. 126 and 133. Herbelot, Biblioth. Orient. p. 896.

which unfolds their origin? Those formidable giants, originally descended from an insular situation, had hence taken their name, and thus were called Dives, in the same manner as we would say islanders. The people of the continent, who had better opportunities of knowing their force and malignancy than their real name, would naturally enough give them the appellation of the men of the isles, just as we termed *Normans, the men of the north*, those unknown barbarians, who in former times infested the coasts of France.

The excessive population of the north constantly administered to those emigrations. A state of warfare has subsisted almost since the beginning of the world, between the north and the south of Asia. Nature has placed in that part of the globe a vast barrier, which traverses it in its breadth; fortified besides by art, it has been from time immemorial at once the point of attack and of defence. Under the shelter of those mountains, the opulent and effeminate natives enjoyed a temporary repose, while hungry and ferocious barbarians acquired strength, population, and warlike habits, for the purpose of surmounting the difficulties opposed to their passage. I wish you to observe, that every thing bears the stamp of this line of demarcation. The people of Gog and Magog, of Tchin and Matchin, the Scythians on this side and on that side of the mountains,

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the Dives and the Peris, are on all occasions two people, who border on a line of boundary, and who, separated and described by it, dwell along its opposite sides. When I see all those facts draw together, and unite by a kind of attraction, I cannot help regarding their agreement as carrying the weight of demonstration, and their general result as amounting to nothing less than truth. One should think that Plato had sketched the picture which I have just laid before you; the line of demarcation of which I am speaking, will be found consigned in his writings. *First of all*, says Critias, *it is necessary to recollect that nine thousand years have elapsed since war broke out between the nations who inhabited above and beyond, and those who inhabited the countries on this side of the Pillars of Hercules**. When we recollect that Tacitus informs us of pillars of Hercules existing in the north; that all evidence on the part of the ancients refers the island Atlantis to that quarter; when we see in Asia an eternal and marked separation between the nations of the north and those of the south; we cannot possibly mistake this same line of separation in the language of Plato, who applies to the Pillars of Hercules every thing that we have referred to Caucasus. But, Sir, those traditions of Europe and Asia have, besides, a common centre of tendency and re-union. I do not consider

* Plato, dialogue entitled Critias.

the

the nine thousand years which Plato mentions, as solar years; but whatever was their length, I adopt them as the basis of a chronological calculation afforded by tradition. Plato, proceeding to give an account of those wars, says, that he is about to relate the events of nine thousand years *. It is very surprizing that the reign of the Dives occupies seven thousand of them, and that of the Peris two thousand †; insomuch, that the wars and period of duration of those two people amount precisely to nine thousand years. All those small facts tend towards one individual object, and take a spontaneous arrangement, like the stones in the walls of Thebes at the sound of Amphion's lyre: in this case it is yours that summons them; you are equally qualified to work such miracles as either Amphion or Orpheus.

Here, Sir, I ought to anticipate an objection. When you proposed to me, you will say, that we should go in quest of the Atlantides, you promised me historical evidence. In truth, you have been pretty successful in combating opinions which place Atlantis in America and the Canary isles; you have shewn me, that the people who emerged from that island did not traverse Africa, and that they could get to Egypt by no other way than by Asia, which is full of their memory. You have traced that

* Plato, in the Timæus.

† *Supra*, p. 30.

people

people to the very foot of Caucasus, from thence also you have deduced the principal nations of Asia. You have told me, that the Dives and Peris can be no other than the ancestors of the Persians, and a primitive branch of the human race. I grant you the probability of those origins. I shall admit that our Atlantides have some relation to your Dives. I see clearly that you have a propensity northward, and that you would be glad to conduct me thither without my knowing it. But take care!—you began by facts; you conclude by affording me no better entertainment than that of fables. We have Hercules on his road to the garden of the Hesperides, by the way of Caucasus; Phaëton thrown headlong into the Eridanus; hell, its gods, and its judges, placed in the empire of Saturn, in the northern parts of the earth; Calypso, whom the poet Homer makes descend from Atlas, and reign in the island Ogygia;—but, according to your own principles, those fables are only semi-historical truths: they are in disguise, and may possibly be equivocal: they have a right to accompany the facts of history, but they ought not to be admitted alone. I cannot confide in your origins, before they have been authenticated by the clear and precise evidence of the historian.

Well, Sir, the historian you call for is here. *The island of Ogygia*, says Plutarch, *is towards the setting*

of

of summer, and distant from England about five days navigation. You know, Sir, that in all countries of our hemisphere, the setting of summer is towards the north. Here, then, is the position of the island Ogygia, or Atlantis, well ascertained in the north of Europe. *Near this island are found three others; in one of which the inhabitants of the country pretend that Saturn is kept prisoner by Jupiter. The master of the gods placed there the giant Ogyges, or Briareus, to watch his father, to superintend those islands, and the adjacent sea, which is called Saturnian. The main land, by which the great sea seems inclosed on all sides, is distant from those islands, as well as from that of Ogygia, about five thousand stadia. A multitude of rivers descend from the main land, and there discharge their waters. The borders of the continent, on the sea-shore, are inhabited, near a large bay, which is not less than the Palus Mæotis, and the mouth of which is precisely opposite to the Caspian Sea.* All this, Sir, is perfectly described. The Greeks could not possibly divine this scheme of geography; nor could they learn it otherwise than by the tradition of tribes descended from the north; a tradition probably containing much information, which is now entirely lost. The Frozen Ocean, which is contiguous to the Pole, may, in fact, be inclosed almost circularly, by the continents of Asia, Europe, and America.

Those

Those four islands may be Iceland, Greenland, Spitzberg, and Nova-Zembla*, or some unknown islands higher in latitude, and at present become wholly inaccessible on account of the ice. The ten last degrees towards the Pole have never been explored. I shall make no rash selection among the islands that still exist and afford access. It might happen that the island Atlantis was believed to be sunk, or lost, in the sea, only because all communication with it had been cut off; because large accumulations of ice intimidated navigators, who, in the beginning of that art, would have but little enterprize. Thus, Atlantis may be only inclosed, and bereaved of all approach by the surrounding ice; but I adhere to Plutarch as my guide, and content myself with pointing out, like him, the islands of the north sea. The islands of which he speaks are at the distance of five thousand stadia, which are equal to ten degrees: this we may regard as nearly the distance of Spitzberg from the continent of Asia. It is impossible to mistake the continent intended, when we are told of a multitude of rivers which discharge themselves into that sea. The Danish and Russian Lapland have but few rivers which run towards the north; the

* Greenland and Spitzberg, perhaps, unite with the continent; but Plutarch, vaguely instructed by a mutilated tradition, might be led to believe that those countries were islands.

conti-

continent of Asia presents us with upwards of twenty-three, great and small *.

The bay, which Plutarch says is not less than the Palus Mæotis, and whose mouth is opposite to the Caspian Sea, is evidently the gulph where the Oby throws in its waters, and which penetrates into the continent, precisely above the upper extremity of the Caspian Sea. I conceive, that nobody could require of ancient times a more accurate description, a position better ascertained, or evidence more clear and authentic.

The people of those islands, continues Plutarch, *consider themselves as inhabitants of the main land* (a circumstance which seems to imply that their island is of large extent), *and us Greeks as islanders, because our land is bathed on all sides by the sea.* Plutarch seems to insinuate, that the Greeks were once their neighbours (just as we suspected might have been the case), in the place of their first abode. He says, *that those who, in former times, dwelt there with Hercules, mixing with Saturn's subjects, regenerated the Greek nation, which began to decline, and to lose their language and laws, by their intercourse with barbarians.*

* The Dwina, the Peczora, the Oby, the Pur, the Nadym, the Taz, the Gydy, the Czerna, the Jenisea, the Piasiga, the Taimura, the Chatanga, the Anabara, the Ola, the Pirka, the Olenek, the Lena, the Amalœwa, the Jana, the Indigirha, the Alazeia, the Kowirnia, and the Anadir, &c.

This

This regeneration is by no means the work of Grecian vanity; it is a confession of the truth. *In this country all honours are conferred, first, upon Hercules, and then upon Saturn. When the planet Saturn appears in the sign of the Bull—a circumstance which happens every thirty years—they prepare for a solemn sacrifice, and a long navigation. Those whose business it is to sail, are chosen by lot: they touch, first of all, at the opposite islands, inhabited by Greek tribes, where the sun, during one month of summer, is scarcely one hour under the horizon; and this short night has, besides, the advantage of twilight.* It is impossible to give a more marked description of the northern climates than we have in this astronomical circumstance. This phenomenon is applicable only to Swedish Lapland and to Iceland, which are situated under the Arctic Polar Circle. *From thence they proceed to the island of Saturn, where they are obliged to remain in his service thirteen years. They are then at liberty to return; but, in general, they prefer to live there quietly, in the abundance of every thing, and free from labour and business, partly devoted to attendance on divine sacrifices, and partly to the study of letters and philosophy. There they remain, captivated by the fertility of the soil and mildness of the atmosphere. Saturn is shut up in a cavern, where he lies fast asleep, and only detained in the bonds of an eternal repose. An infinity of Demons attend in his service, who were his courtiers and favourites at the*

time

time when he held the reins of government over men *. Here, then, according to the testimony of Plutarch, is the region of hell, where Saturn reigns, and where men go to meet him, when they take leave of the world †.

He is a historian, and at the same time a philosopher, who addresses you, Sir: read carefully this narrative, weigh well the different facts it contains: there is here considerable matter for reflection. I shall ob-

* Plutarchus, *de Facie in Orbe Lunæ*, sec. 30.

† Rudbeck, a learned Swede, maintained, almost a century ago, that Sweden was the Atlantis of Plato. He even thought he had found, in the environs of the ancient Upsal, the situation and dimensions which Plato assigns to the capital of that island. I am not qualified to judge of that local report, which he attempts to establish in proof. But his work is adorned with the genius of the times, as well as profound erudition. Every one must see that he has been of very considerable use to me. I readily pay him this tribute of gratitude, which is his due. If that work had but little success, it was the fault of the readers, of whom there were but few whose minds were prepared for it. This idea of northern origins was by no means matured; scarcely can it be said to be so at this day. Rudbeck, by condescending to be too particular, in attributing this origin to Sweden, possibly did it harm. Matters of high antiquity do not admit of such specific detail, nor resemblances so strongly characterised. Besides, he departed from the authority of Plato. Sweden is not an island, and Atlantis was one: it is the same with Ogygia, or the island of the Hyperboreans. The suffrages of all the ancients concur and unite in this; and Plutarch evidently places the country of the Atlantides in an island of the Frozen Sea. The monuments of astronomy have been my guide: I receive protection from their age and authenticity; it is the first of my advantages. I have also the benefit of the progress of knowledge since the days of Rudbeck; and above all, the advantage of addressing myself to readers whose minds are better informed and more scientific.

serve,

serve, first of all, that there is one point upon which Plutarch seems to be in contradiction with himself. He begins, by settling the position of the island Ogygia in relation to England, and places it at the setting of summer, that is to say, towards the north. Afterwards, when he comes to consider those islands in relation to the continent, he does not refer them to Europe; a circumstance that would have been extremely natural, since he was speaking of an island in the neighbourhood of Great Britain. He assigns their distance relatively to a continent, or main land, which, by all the features of the narrative, can be no other than the continent of Asia. Those features consist in the multitude of rivers, and the bay, which is evidently the vast mouth of the Oby. This circumstance, seemingly contradictory, does not surprize me. Plutarch, far removed as he was from the times of which he speaks, had no means of information but tradition, which had passed down through many generations, through many races of men, and in which sterling truth had been incorporated and debased with much alloy. Plutarch had not under his eye a map of those northern countries; but we see by his recital, that the islands, whose distance he refers to the continent of Asia, were situated to the north of that part of the world; that it was along the coast of Asia they carried on an intercourse with the inhabitants of the main land, either because Nova-

Zembla served them as a port or intermediate station; or for other reasons, which it is impossible for us to divine. The islands said to be opposite, and inhabited by Greek tribes, where the sun, during a month, is scarcely an hour under the horizon, may perhaps be Russian Lapland, or the north of Finland, where the inhabitants must have days of nearly that description, and where M. Idman found some remains of the Greek language*. The island of Saturn might be Spitzberg, or Greenland. I easily see that you will be puzzled to account for the caprice of those voyagers, who had no desire to quit the island, after having touched at it. You remember the Dutchmen who passed a winter, though much against their will, on Nova-Zembla; you are confounded at those divine sacrifices in a climate where the gods bestow so little; at the study of letters and philosophy in the midst of a cold which freezes a man's ideas as well as the waters around him; above all, you are disposed to smile at the fertility of the soil and mildness of the atmosphere. But, Sir, it is Plutarch who speaks: I do no more than relate facts. He was not a disciple of M. De Buffon; nor is he liable to be suspected of any connivance with his theories. All those facts, seemingly incomprehensible, demand the refrigeration of the earth: this removes all difficulties. It must rest with you whether you will grant it.

* *Supra*, p. 283, & suivante.

I have

I have cited to you the fables of Phaëton, of the Hesperides, of Hell, of Hercules, because the Greek historians, as well as poets, lay the scene of them in the north, and because their testimony is confirmed by the northern languages, which preserve the roots whence have sprung the bulk of names we find employed in them; almost all of which have a close connection with Saturn, or his brother Atlas. Plutarch seems to affirm here, that Saturn was kept prisoner by his son Jupiter in some island of the north, and in the midst of the Frozen Sea, called at that time Saturnian. The Greeks, nevertheless, took all those fables to themselves. Thus Saturn had his reign in Italy; his wife Rhea lay in of his son Jupiter in the island of Crete, where, according to the fable, this prince afterwards governed. What regard, then, are we to pay to the tradition, as related by Plutarch? It gives a flat contradiction to all the national pretensions of Greece and Italy. This tradition, which subsists in the midst of so many opposing claims, a tradition which they had no interest either to invent or encourage, is the truth, which we frequently invoke without success, and which frequently survives all our attempts to destroy it.

But you will tell me. Why am I to believe that a branch of the human race issued from those islands; that the Atlantides made a grand irruption; and that in process of time, and by continuing their march,

they at last over-ran a part of Asia, Europe, and Africa, impressing on all, the seal of their institutions, and leaving every where the documents of their origin? Was it, then, for the purpose of conveying them among us, that you took care they should be the inventors of navigation? No doubt, Sir; but, at the same time, I have invented nothing that has not the sanction of authority. When I offered you a philosophical idea, you found it coupled with a tradition; for history is the main support of philosophy, and philosophy is the lamp of history. I imagine I have given you sufficient proof, that the Atlantides never entered Egypt otherwise than by Asia; that they actually descended from Caucasus. Plutarch coincides with me, in shewing you Atlantis, the cradle of that race of conquerors, in one of the islands of the Frozen Ocean. Nobody will doubt that they must have had ships, and traversed the sea, in order to arrive in Asia: the necessary connections of things may easily be supplied by the historian. This presumption is so natural, that I might allow it to stand upon its own bottom; but I rest it, in like manner, upon a tradition. The Orientalists tell you of an obscure sea, of a dark and melancholy region, where lie the fortunate islands, and *the fountain of life*. The whole of this has much resemblance to the Elysian Fields in a country of darkness, to the golden age, to the country of the Fées, where every one

was

was happy, because every one was young. But a circumstance truly worthy of remark, is what they mention with respect to Dry Island, or the great continent, *which is beyond the mountains of Caf* *, that is to say, Caucasus, and consequently towards the north. *The land where we live is surrounded by the ocean; but beyond the ocean is another land, which touches the walls of heaven: it is in that land where man was created, where was the terrestrial paradise. In the time of the deluge, Noah was carried by the ark into the land which his posterity now inhabit* †. The horse with twelve feet, which was of so much service to Huschenk in the progress of his conquests, was found on that continent named *Dry Island* ‡. The charger and his twelve feet are perhaps allegorical. It was natural enough to describe a boat with twelve oars in this manner, and to compare its strange and unknown velocity to the swiftness of a horse. The astonishment of barbarous nations has given birth to many such metamorphoses. Thus the tradition of that ancient continent, or the island situated beyond the ocean, is interwoven with the history of Persia.

* Herbelot, p. 230, 385, 593.

† Cosmas Indico Pleustes in Collect. nova Patrum, tom. ii. p. 188. In the sixteenth century the monk Cosmas maintained this opinion, that man, in primitive time, dwelt in a land beyond the ocean: he had travelled in Asia, and said he had it from a learned Chaldean.—Ibid. and Journ. des Sav. Suppl. 1707, p. 20.

‡ *Supra*, p. 154.

The Orientalists, who are not a little tenacious of their ancient traditions, have adapted to the history of the deluge the circumstance of men's having passed from one land to another. Those men came by sea, and from a country to which the Orientalists assigned the terrestrial paradise, because it was the place of their first abode, and their golden age. You will recollect, Sir, that the country of Schadukian, that charming residence of the Fées, lies beyond the mountains, and that it is necessary, in order to arrive at it, to pass through dark regions which never enjoy the light of the sun. These are the countries of the north, which are afflicted with nights of long duration The island Atlantis of Plato, Plutarch's island of Ogygia, are clearly the same with the *Dry Island* of the Orientalists. No man can land there, unless he is conducted by an intelligence of a superior order*. I am not astonished at my good fortune in having found it, since I am under the safe conduct of yours. The united evidence of Greek and Oriental fables, the spirit of Europe and Asia, in short, the history of those two quarters of the globe, have led us to the truth; a truth which amounts to nothing less than the origin of the Atlantis, the ancient residence of a lost people. If the Atlantides, corrupted in their manners, and degraded into the character of robbers, are the same with the Dives, the terror of

* *Supra*, p. 180.

whom

whom suggested the notion of demons occupied in the misfortunes of mankind; if the Dives came from those formerly fertile islands—the same islands were also the primitive abode of the Peris, or Fées, who used to protect and defend us. To them, therefore, we are to refer the country of great riches, and the city of Diamonds. The magnificence of the Temple of Neptune* serves to re-trace the beauties that adorned the residence of the Fées. The Atlantides, just and virtuous before they reached the summit of their power, before an overgrown population rendered living difficult and emigration necessary, have likewise, in the back ground of their picture, the reign of their Saturn, or that of justice, arising in the halcyon days of Rhea.

You will surely agree with me, Sir, that those regions which gave rise to the primitive fables and institutions, were inhabited before the rest. In this case, if you will indulge me in a conjecture or two, I would observe, that there the life of man might have been more peaceful and happy than in more beautiful climates. At a time when the internal heat of the earth was more energetic, when it had a greater ascendancy over the heat of the sun, the temperature would be much less variable; and hence we may form some idea of that perpetual spring which the poets still regret in their verses. In pro-

* *Supra*, p. 37.

portion as we approach the Poles, the motion of the earth decreases, and her rotation makes us pass through a smaller space in the same time. As, at the Pole, every thing is at rest, it should seem that there the atmosphere ought to be in a state of less agitation*. The succession of day and night in our Temperate Zones, is another cause of continual variations in the air: where the year consists of a day and a night only, it ought to have but two seasons, and two changes of temperature. If we suppose a heat nearly equal and permanent over the whole surface of the globe, the atmosphere would be agitated by such winds only as arise from the motion of the heavenly bodies, and which prevail chiefly between the Tropics; but as soon as the cold set in at the two Poles; as soon as they became stored with ice, accumulating in the course of each succeeding winter—the atmosphere fell under two masters. it contained in its bosom two principles of hostility. There commenced a sort of warfare between heat and cold; the expan-

* The atmosphere has the same motion with the solid mass of the globe: the rotation of the earth would be no cause of the wind, did the atmosphere remain constantly in the same state: the whole would be in equilibrio; the whole would turn round together; and there would be parts of the atmosphere, as there are parts of the globe, which, in spite of this motion, would remain at rest;—but when vapours ascend from the earth, these emanations form columns of more or less gravity; the equilibrium is broken; and the rotation of the earth can restore the equipoise of the whole no otherwise than by a motion which is a cause of wind.—*Encyclop.* art. Vent.

sion

sion of one zone re-acting upon the condensation of another. The north wind, which ravages the fields; the south, which brings on rain and storm, blew over the earth; and new and unknown winds issued from the Poles. Those causes of agitation in the atmosphere, those vicissitudes, eternally repeated, and more or less sensibly felt, might, in process of time, sap the basis of human life. In a situation where these circumstances did not operate, one can conceive that life might be more durable, and extend to a longer period. A heat forever the same, a perfect uniformity in the season, upon which probably depends equality in the bodily humours, would maintain peace in the heart, as well as in the atmosphere, and render life as gentle and happy as it was lasting and durable.

It was there, then, that some of our ancestors, a part of the human race, found all the earthly happiness that men are capable of enjoying. Shut up in those islands, they passed the first age of the species in innocence; and now that they have lost it, it still lives in their remembrance: it is the remembrance, however, of a time that is never to return. Man's return to those deserted and famished regions of the globe, is become as impossible as that of the time present to the time past. They are now inaccessible: Nature has walled them in. The sea is as solid as any of our rivers in the most rigorous winter; the Pole is encircled with a girdle of ice, and that ancient world

has

has long since perished by cold. Two eminent navigators have made the tour of the two Frozen Zones*: they have described the ice which set bounds to their progress; while M. De Buffon † gives you a design of those girdles, those walls of ice, which at present preclude all access to the Poles; and which, as it is advancing gradually towards us, will one day cover the whole surface of the globe, and meet at the Equator. I feel less regret for the people of the south Pole, of whom I know nothing; but I am sorry that the north, the scene of so many ancient institutions, the country of the golden age, should now be the seat of an eternal winter. I have had my golden age, which I regret: it is passed, and my most agreeable moments are spent in conversing of truth and philosophy in the presence of a great man, who condescends to give me his attention.

I am, with respect, &c.

* Captain Phipps, and Captain Cook, in 1773, 1774, and 1775.

† M. De Buffon, Volume des Epoques de la Nature.

TWENTY-FOURTH LETTER TO M. DE VOLTAIRE.

[An anterior people, and recapitulation of these Letters.]

Paris, 12th May, 1773.

WHAT an excellent thing, Sir, is that of travelling! By traversing countries, which excite in us a lively interest, we acquire new ideas; ideas of which we had no expectation. Every thing is paradox, or romance, to a man of sedentary habits: truth is for such only as take pains to discover it: we must see Nature, which it is impossible for us to pre-conceive, and which we find it difficult to know, even when she drops the veil. It has not been for nothing that we turned our steps towards the north: with all our prejudices against those frozen regions, we should never have thought of referring to that quarter the residence of a great part of the human race, of that warlike and conquering part of it, who, spreading themselves abroad like a torrent, ravaged every thing in their impetuous descent, and who never began to cultivate

cultivate the soil till they got to smooth plains, where they relaxed of their progress.

I confess it seems a very extraordinary conclusion, that men should have had their primitive residence in Spitzberg, Greenland, and Nova-Zembla. I was as much struck as you can be at this singularity, and I had no small difficulty in bringing myself to conceive it. I laid this origin before you in my first Letter, only as a conjecture. At that time I went no higher than the forty-ninth degree of latitude. If I go farther now, I am guided by facts; if I am less timorous, it is a glimpse of the truth that has rendered me more enterprizing. You will perhaps say that I compose a system, and your complaisance may add, that it is ingenious; but this playful conceit of the imagination is not in my character. A relish for truth has too great an ascendancy over me. I have not courage enough to combat it face to face. My pen would not find expressions for ideas, the truth of which I could not admit. Suffer me, Sir, to explain myself on the subject of system. It should seem that, in the opinion of many people, a system is nothing but a piece of mere wit, or romance. The word itself is become the mark of reprobation; and the sentence for banishing an idea into the region of chimeras, is awarded, by observing that it is a system. Such has been the perversion of this term, which is strangely removed from its Greek origin. System signifies

signifies *assemblage*, or *collection*. You find this signification in a word which serves to denote the physiology of the heavens. We say the system of the world, when we wish to comprehend under one general term all the bodies which, having the sun for the centre of their motions, and head of their family, travel together, revolve round him, round one another, and are all bound, collected by a common cause. Thus, system is nothing but the connection of facts: when it is no more, when it does not twist and pervert them, it merits no censure. The true meaning of the word makes a distinction between a system and a romance. An explanation, how ingenious soever, if it rests on a single fact, is a romance; before it amounts to a system, it must embrace at least two: it then unites, or *collects*, and will have some degree of probability. This probability increases in proportion to the facts united under a common tie; and it may at last become infinite, like the number of the facts themselves: it is in this sense that my opinion is a system. In spite of its singularity, it contains nothing forced: facts alone gave rise to it; and all those which have presented themselves in a train of succession, appear to me to take a spontaneous arrangement. Each fact contributes a fresh support; and the whole are like so many profound and multiplied roots, which attach to the soil a tree which all the violence of the wind cannot bring to the ground:

ground: those multitudinous roots are the sole foundation of my security. In order to fell the tree, it will not suffice to discuss one of them; it will be necessary to tap it in the earth, or cut up the whole. Until this is the case, my opinion will not lose its verisimilitude; or my system, if you like the term better, will preserve its probability.

This opinion seems to have nothing against it but the cold of the north. I shall be asked, How is it possible that man should exist under it? I might say, that man is patient and accommodating: if the king of Nature is every where modified by her influence, he owes this modification to the resistance which he opposes to her. He supports one extreme as well as the other: he lives where other beings are doomed to perish. Man might, then, have been able to live, though painfully, under the cold. But I feel a reluctance, as well as you, to refer to rigorous climates, that numerous race which peopled and gave law to a large portion of the globe. I am considering those climates as they exist at present; climates which, in former times, had great resources. I see that there Nature is in a state of languor: she is daily withdrawing herself from it: it is no longer the place she has chosen as the scene of her productive energies. I am under the necessity of telling you, that those climates have suffered a change. I am bold to call upon you, Sir, to believe in the refrigera-

tion

tion of the earth, in the same manner as you believed in the attraction of Newton. You are the French apostle of this sublime truth. I present you with another, which is entitled to the same homage. By defending the latter as you have done the former, you will acquire equal glory. I have explained in my tenth Letter, the various physical reasons in which the ingenious hypothesis of M. De Buffon is founded. The earth contains an internal heat, which evaporates, and is gradually dissipated. The aged earth loses it in the course of time, as we, when we become old, lose that which gives us animation. But permit me to ask, If the blood of this veteran, which circulates so sluggishly, did not, in days of yore, boil in his veins? You tell me, that Spitzberg and Greenland are receptacles of ice; but do you fancy that Nature created ice? It is nothing but water consolidated, or a portion of matter which has been abandoned by fire. A metal in fusion, and poured into a mould, hardens, and shoots into ramifications, as soon as the fire abates and the heat escapes from it. Its natural state is solidity: even the temperature of summer is insufficient to retain it in the form of a fluid. But in travelling over the surface of the globe, do you meet masses of solid metal here, rivulets of running metal there? Why, then, do you find waters which run and fertilize, and at the same time sterile masses, composed of water intercepted

cepted and congealed? Which is its primitive state? Which of these two preceded the other, that of water, or that of ice? If the earth was produced with such differences in similar substances, what becomes of the unity of Nature's operations? I have a clear conception of it, the moment I view water and ice as successive states of the same substance. The seas arrested and caught, and become solid as the earth. The frozen girdles of the Poles were once like the metal as it runs from the furnace. The water which composes those girdles, or barriers, ran in ancient times: it became solid like the metal, when the grand furnace in the bosom of the earth lost its activity. The heat of the globe is now insufficient: it requires the assistance of the sun's rays at the summer solstice, to restore water to its primitive fluidity. Frederic Martens, when he landed at Spitzberg, saw on the land, at the bottom of certain mountains of earth, seven mountains of ice; they were of a prodigious height, and the most lofty in the country. *He could perceive*, says he, *that they were every day increasing in magnitude**. The gradual growth which we observe in the Glaciers of Switzerland, furnishes an example of the same thing; villages, as it should seem, lie buried in frost and snow: church steeples, which will soon be wholly covered, are still above the level of the ice. But since the ice in those regions is in a growing state, there

* Hist. Gen. des Voyages, tom. lviii. p. 232.

must

must have been a time when this process began. Even though ice should be generated by ice, still there must have been a primary and original ice, which was author of the race; an ice of such strength and solidity, that the heat of summer should not be equal to its dissolution. Well, who carried thither this primeval and permanent ice, if it was not a change of temperature, the refrigeration of the earth? When the equilibrium of the seasons became interrupted, and when winter acquired an ascendancy, each summer suffered a disadvantage: it was disqualified for converting all the waters into a fluid state; a remnant of the old received an accession from the new ice; successive returns of winter laid stratum above stratum; and it only required ages to form it into mountains.

You will judge, Sir, whether it is not in this manner that they are progressively formed. I am not inclined to be more partial than yourself to ideas purely hypothetical. That of the refrigeration of the earth is so natural, it applies to such a diversity of facts, that it has altogether the air of truth. This truth, however, in the life of one or several successive individuals, is not a matter of sensible perception; nor is it extraordinary that, in this case, men should still persist in their incredulity. How many of our species believe only what they see with their eyes, what they feel with their hands! Time, however,

ever, will place it within the sphere of their capacity, we must expect it with patience. If I have entered into those philosophical views, it has been owing to a superabundance of proof, and, above all, because philosophy furnishes an illustration of facts, and is always subservient to the cause of truth. You have no right to ask me for reasons, when I produce you facts. The reasons may lie concealed in the bosom of Nature; the facts are manifest to all. I see the actions of crowned heads. I am not in their councils, to penetrate the motives and causes. Whatever may be the reasons why a certain part of the human race had their primitive residence in the northern regions of the earth, I conceive I have made the fact evident, as well as their travels towards the Equator.

The Atlantides made their appearance in Egypt; they could reach it no otherwise than by Asia; it was in Syria and in Phrygia, as well as in Egypt, that they established the worship of the sun: this mode of worship is that of the north; we have seen them pass Mount Caucasus with the Scythians, or under the same name. The Persians descended from those mountains, they made war upon the Dives, who wanted to follow the same route; they persevered in the adoration of fire, which could not originate in a hot country. The Chinese affirm that they entered China from the north; the Indians re-

member

member the mountains where they formerly dwelt; they revisit them in the character of pilgrims, as water attempts to rise to the level from which it fell. We have seen from east to west a line of fortifications which bisects Asia, a state of warfare which exists from time immemorial; and the efforts of the northern tribes against those of the south, prolonged even to our own times, afford demonstrative evidence of the march which I have delineated. They endeavour to descend, because their fathers, their grandfathers, and first ancestors descended before them. The fables of antiquity must have been conveyed in those emigrations, the proof of which is established by history. Fables belong to dark times, to the beginnings of things; they must then have taken their rise in the country of origins. Besides, those fables communicated to the Greeks by the Phœnicians and Egyptians, are ultimately to be referred to the common source of the two nations, which was among the natives of Atlantis. If we would carry back those fables to the place of their nativity, we must repass Caucasus, which was traversed by the Atlantides, we must penetrate into Scythia, where Hercules was known. Hercules, you admit, was a man of the north; Hercules was in the garden of the Hesperides, and the Greeks themselves place this garden, as well as Tartarus and the Elysian Fields, towards the north, in the

country of long nights. They speak of those fortunate islands, the islands of the Hyperboreans, where the worship of the sun, which they introduced into Syria, took its rise. These islands are situated in the north of Asia; this is the spot whence men were transported to the continent. Navigation bears the impression of a northern origin. The Dives, who gave so much molestation to the Persians, were doubtless islanders, nay, were no other than the Atlantides, who, issuing forth at different periods, invaded Asia under the conduct of Bacchus, Osiris, Hercules, Acmon, &c. To all those facts, and multiplied probabilities, Plutarch subjoins his positive evidence, by shewing you that Ogygia is the same with the island Atlantis, in a higher latitude than Europe or Asia. I do not know what you have to reply to him; for my own part, I submit to his judgment. I had but little expectation to find such a mass of evidence in matters of so high antiquity. Do you imagine, that a system founded as this is, on such a variety of corroborating points, can easily be shaken? I have already shewn you, by a marked similarity of usages, manners, institutions and prejudices, that those ancient nations, the Chinese, Indians, Chaldeans, and Persians, were brethren; one easily sees that they all originated from a common stock. We no sooner arrive among them, than we begin to tread upon the wreck of antiquity; in this

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wreck are systems of music, which make but parts of a whole *; a large series of itinerary measures, which, scattered among those different nations, had once belonged to a general system, of which one individual people must have been the authors †; isolated or detached astronomical facts, which are the remains of a science that no longer exists; the same source of legislation for the arts, sciences and religion. Their religions are nothing but physical ideas in disguise. On all sides, we meet with institutions which have been perverted by barbarism and covered with the rust of ages. Every where, in fine, we are presented with a picture of ignorance, which succeeds to knowledge; a modern founded upon an ancient state of things. The fables of Phœnix and Janus, the worship of fire, as well as that of the sun, bear the stamp of the northern climates; the corn, which men in their emigrations carried along with them, the corn, which administers to their subsistence, grows spontaneously in the same climates: certain truths, the result of astronomical observation, appear to belong to a higher latitude than that of China, India, or Chaldea; to countries more northerly than Caucasus. Thus it is that fables, sciences, nations, descended from those mountains, and such are the ideas, with fresh evidence, I now submit to

* Hist. de l'Astron. Ancienne, p. 85.

† Hist. de l'Astron. Mod. tom. i. lib. iv. Ecteres, lib. iii.

your consideration. Can you conceive, that a system which embraces a natural explanation of so many fables, a system which tallies in so many points with the facts of history, astronomy and physics, should not be the history of man, and a faithful picture of Nature?

Those excellent institutions, it is true, are the production of a people who have vanished from the earth; of a people whose name is lost, and of whom no mention is made in history: but the sciences take their revenge for this neglect: they contain fragments which bear the impression of their genius, and serve to attest the reality of their existence. I perceive, Sir, you will ask me, whether the Atlantides are the same with that anterior people whose memory I was so solicitous to revive? this question is not a little embarrassing. Our travels have already enabled us to discover no fewer than five lost people; the two spoken of by Plato, who contended in battle near the Pillars of Hercules; the Peris and Dives, who carried on war around Caucasus; lastly, the people discovered by M. Pallas, near the river Jenisea, who wrought mines in the bowels of the earth with tools of brass, previously to the invention of iron. Far as I am from times of that high antiquity, I can catch only the most legible characters; I lose the small ones, which escape my eye; still, however, I do a great deal, for a man who happens

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to have a short sight. The book of ancient history is torn; time has dispersed or destroyed the fragments. I have replaced and joined some of them together; and as I have succeeded in finding a consistent meaning, I invite you to read in it a part of that history; but if you will be satisfied only with the whole, you must demand it of time, which has carried it off from us. Were I composing a romance for your amusement, I should find little difficulty to shew you the people you call for; I should select among the five I have named, that for which I have the strongest predilection, that which has the greatest brilliancy of character, in order to invest it with the glory of those institutions. But as I have the honour to be your conductor, it must be my business to proceed by the light of facts and of truth, and to offer you nothing but evident conclusions.

The first, then, of these conclusions is this, that there was an ancient state of things, which preceded the known nations of China, India, and Persia; that those nations descended from Caucasus, and that the above ancient state of things existed beyond the mountains. The northern origins and institutions which I have laid before you, are then authentic. The Persians themselves place the Peris and Dives on the other side of Mount Caucasus; the annals of history make the Atlantides, as well as their enemies, issue from the islands and shores of the Frozen Ocean.

M. Pallas discovered the traces of a people, the Tschoudes, in the plains of Tartary: thus the five most ancient people belong to the northern regions of the globe. When we commenced our travels, Sir, we were apprehensive we should not find the single people we were going in quest of; in place of one, we have fallen in with five, and are somewhat incommoded by their number. In order to our making a proper choice, we must try to reduce it. First of all, I have to observe, that the giants, or Dives, who were the terror of Asia, gave rise to that alarm, merely by their determined efforts to pass the mountains. I perceive that the Atlantides traversed them; and I conclude that the natives, harassed in their possessions, or expelled by usurpers, came to denominate giants, or Dives, the tribes who, incited by the thirst of pillage and conquest, spread war and devastation every where on their passage. This, Sir, is a grand leading feature, with all the evidence we can desire. It is in this manner we are enabled to collect the truth amidst the wreck of history; and to deny it our assent, is as much as to say that we have no desire to be made acquainted with ancient times. From this prominent feature of history, I infer, that the giants, the Dives, the Atlantides, might be but the same people, known by one or more emigrations. The people who combated the Atlantides near the Pillars of Hercules, might, in like manner,

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be no other than the Peris, who were persecuted for so great a length of time by the irruptions of the Dives. Thus the five people may be reduced to three, the Atlantides, or Dives, the Peris, and Tschoudes. I observe, that the Atlantides carried with them into Syria and Egypt the whole histories or fables of Saturn, of Jupiter, of Hercules, the memory of the times of Rhea, and the golden age, trials prolonged after life, the idea of Tartarus and the Elysian Fields, the allegories of Proserpine and Adonis relative to the absence of the sun, the worship of that star, as it sprang from climates where such intervals of absence made him more particularly the object of affection; finally, the worship of fire, rendered indispensably necessary, by reason of the cold which forced men from the north. Such are the institutions of the Atlantides, such the productions of a people before they attained any high degree of improvement: but as to the arts and sciences, I discover their progress; I see the inventions that have come down to us, though I do not see their authors with equal clearness. These authors shall be either of three people you chuse. Your light is stronger than mine, and it enables you to give a better decision. The Atlantides, who issued from an island of the Frozen Sea, are doubtless those Hyperboreans of whom the Greeks speak so often as inhabitants of an island. The Hyperboreans were

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in possession of the lunar cycle of nineteen years, which Meton introduced into Greece, and of which he was esteemed the author; it is a result obtained only in an advanced state of astronomy. On the other hand, when Zoroaster conveyed the light of knowledge into Persia, the circumstances of his tale serve to shew us that he came from a climate of forty-nine degrees. It is thus very difficult to ascertain the true native country of the sciences. But, Sir, let us judge of the past by the present. If the continent of Europe were annihilated, posterity might view it as having been composed of nations, different in manners, usages, language, as well as in degrees of knowledge, or they might consider all those nations in a mass, and regard Europeans as an individual people, authors of the most excellent institutions, and of the highest attainments in the sciences. Objects unite and are confounded, when seen at a great distance; and this is precisely what happens to us when we would stretch our view into the remote regions of antiquity. Plutarch points out to us, in the Frozen Sea, four inhabited islands: those islands contained different nations, or tribes: they might be the source of different emigrations. In the continent of Asia, those vast regions of Tartary which lie between the Frozen Ocean and Caucasus, and between Camchatka and St. Petersburg, are of almost as great extent as the whole

whole of Europe. Though, in those ancient times, it would not be fully inhabited, still it must have contained several different nations; a proof of this we find in the languages which have come down to us as ancient. You have the Zend and the Pelhvi preserved by the Persians; the Sanscrit still in existence among the Indians; and the language of Tangut, which has made its way to Thibet. These languages must have belonged to different people. M. De Gebelin supplies me with a fact, which it is proper I should notice. The letters of the alphabet found at Persepolis do not exceed five; and it is observed that they differ equally by the manner in which they are combined, and that in which they are placed. So also the Irish characters, called *Ogham*, consist merely in a unit repeated five times, and whose value changes, according to the way in which it is placed relatively to a fictitious line. They have much analogy with those of Persepolis*: the strokes which represent unity are perpendicular. The Koua of Fohi consist of horizontal lines: Leibnitz fancied he could discover in them his binary arithmetic†. The one and the other seem to belong to a numerical language, founded in five or two numbers; the one is derived from the number of fingers on the one hand; the other, which employs but two numbers,

* Origine de Langage, p. 506.

† Lettres sur l'Origine des Sciences, p. 146.

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is only a simplified and perfected state of the first. Plutarch observes, that *pente*, in Greek, signifies five, and that *pembasastai* signified, anciently, *to number* *. Consequently this root, *pente*, seems to belong to Asia. In Hindostan there is a province called Pengab, which owes its name to five rivers, among which it is situated †. I have no doubt that the word *gab*, or *ab*, denotes rivers ‡. It is singular enough, that in this language the monosyllable *pen* should have the same signification as in the Greek. May not these analogies, Sir, warrant a belief that the root *pente*, and the verb *pembasastai*, sprang from the Oriental languages, and particularly from the numerical language formed of unity five times repeated? The characters preserved upon the ruins of Persepolis bring to my mind, that, according to a Persian tradition, *Estekar*, or Persepolis, was built by the Peris in the time of Gian-ben-Gian §. Thus, this numerical language may have been the work of the Peris, or Fées. The Peris, as we have already observed, were the ancestors of the Persians. Persia, which the Orientalists name *Fars*, is in Scripture

* Of Isis and Osiris, sec. 29.

† Hist. Gen. des Voy. tom. xxxviii. p. 8.

‡ What contributes to my persuasion of this, is, that another province bears the name of *Doab*, which signifies, between two waters, or rivers.—Hist. des Voy. tom. xxxviii. p. 24.——*Ab* signifies, then, water, or river. Hence also, perhaps, the origin of the word *duo*.

§ Biblioth. Orient. p. 327.

called

called Paras*; a word which may signify the country of the Fées, or their descendants. If, after having offered to your consideration matters of fact and solid truth, you will indulge me in a conjecture or two, I would say, that Zoroaster, having descended from a latitude of forty-nine degrees, taught philosophy and wrote his books in the Zend and Pelhvi language; and I would conclude, that having come for the purpose of instructing the nations, the country he had left must have been in possession of knowledge. This latitude and country are at the same time the situation where the Peris maintained their ground against the Dives, in the environs of Caucasus. I have a suspicion that the Zend and Pelhvi were the vulgar languages of those nations, and that of five units was their learned language; for as a small number of sounds indicates the poverty of language, the making a small number of characters sufficient to represent all manner of sounds, is a proof of deep combination and research. The Sanscrit, the language of Tangut, or Thibet, must have belonged to other nations. In the same manner, when we contemplate the sciences, we find the Persians, the Indians, the Siamese, and even the Chinese, had astronomical tables of a certain degree of accuracy; while the different elements on which they were founded indicate separate modes of investi-

* M. Danville, Geog. Anc. tom. ii. p. 267.

gation.

gation. I am disposed to think that this people is the same with that whose name *(Magog)* has supplied modern languages with the terms *magus*, *magic*, *master*, *magistrate*, *magnificence*, magnanimity. I have much reliance on that reminiscence of things preserved in the etymology of words. Science, wisdom, power, greatness of mind, are derived from the root *mag*, or from a people whose name served to recall those ideas: every thing that is great was called after their name: it has remained in the terms which relate to the detail of agriculture, the most ancient of all institutions*. This name conducts us, then, to all manner of origins, to the foot of the rampart of Magog, to the latitude of forty-nine degrees, to the spot where the Peris-foughr, and where the Tschoudes dwelt; three people who have a strong analogy to one another. But do they seem to have formed a system of nations like the people of Europe? Ought we to regard them as consisting of several distinct states, or as one and the same people, whose language, whose knowledge fluctuated with the progress of civilization, and who assumed different names, according to times and places? Are we to presume that the different degrees of knowledge, of which we see the traces, refer to different epochs of

* In Latin, *magalia*, huts, cottages; *magigoporus*, a thresher; *maginium*, a decease in the cattle; *magnalia*, great actions; *magnates*, grandees; *magnitudo*, greatness, grandeur.

colonial

colonial emigration; that those colonies, departing with the instruction then acquired in the mother country, retained in the place of their settlement the same knowledge, without additional improvement; and that they resemble each other just as Frenchmen of the present and two centuries ago might resemble each other? As to this, Sir, I confess myself at a loss. Those two systems are possible, nay, they are both probable. As I have no revelation of the past, I can throw no farther light upon the subject. I am incited by the most eager curiosity, and have the strongest desire to know ancient times; so interesting to me is the origin of the human race! All the mischief that occurred is wrapt up in the obscurity of time: the memory of mankind has only preserved for us the germs of morals and science. They were seen to expand and advance towards maturity in the progress of generations, in order to produce the fruit of which we reap the advantage. We would be glad to ascend the stream of ages, mark the different stages of this developement, observe virtue and man in their origin; just as we are pleased to ascend the course of a river which produces our riches, and whose borders are fertile and agreeably diversified. When we came to its source, whence our treasures emerged, we would say—the human mind is like these waters; it acquires strength and consequence as it continues its progress: poor and humble in its origin,

origin, it enriches itself with every thing it meets; it fertilizes every thing it touches; and excites astonishment by its grandeur and majesty. I am also aware, Sir, that the imagination becomes fatigued by wandering in those distant regions: it wishes for certain known points where it may take repose, and a chalked line of march which it may pursue with security. If you shall order me to combine and compare the facts to which I have called your attention, to reconcile Plato with Plutarch, and to amuse you with a romance (however great the danger of giving a loose rein to the imagination in the presence of a great poet, whose genius has produced romances of deep interest, as well as fables adorned by the graces), I must ever be sensible of your indulgence: I am ready to obey you; since in writing to you, I write only to the philosopher: I speak to you, not for my amusement, but for my edification.

We may conceive that the Atlantides, natives of an island in the Frozen Ocean, perhaps Spitzberg *, witnessed in that island the reign of Uranus, Hesperus, and Atlas: the kingdom of Saturn, lying westward, shall be, if you please, Greenland, which is thought to join Spitzberg. Those nations, with an

* In Spitzberg, which is about the seventy-ninth degree of latitude, the sun is absent during four months of the year: it is there, then, that they might have imagined years of four months, of which I make mention in my History of Ancient Astronomy, p. 104.

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overgrown population, and in want of the means of subsistence, would feel the necessity of extending their possessions: they would construct ships, run the hazard of considerable voyages; at first to the small islands in their vicinity, afterwards to the continent of Asia. The gulph of the Oby, which would offer them shelter, an asylum from the fury of the storm, would be the period of the longest of those navigations." The distance of the passage is 5000 stadia*, or about 250 leagues. The success of this expedition would render its termination a matter of considerable interest. Hercules, upon landing, would naturally set up pillars on the spot, to denote the most remote limits of those countries to which any mortal had ever penetrated †. This colony, at liberty to enlarge their borders, would people with their children that tract of country which is contained between the Oby and the Jenisca. These last would advance gradually and in succession towards the source of those rivers, following always the fertility of their banks. However, Sir, the route which they had pursued was neither lost nor obstructed; the su-

* From Spitzberg to the mouth of the Oby, is a distance of ten degrees of latitude, which, at the rate of 500 stadia to a degree, amount to 5000 stadia.

† It was in this settlement, towards the 68 or 70 degrees of latitude, and about the gulph of the Oby, that originated the fables of Phœnix, Janus, and Freja, which suppose an absence of the sun for 65 days.—Hist. de l'Astr. Anc. p. 104, 326.

perfluous population of those islands continued to find their way to the continent; the tribes, though of the same kindred, after ages of separation, were unknown to each other; the new-comers were not only strangers, but enemies; the soil became the cause of dispute;—and here, Sir, is the war of which Plato speaks, between nations separated by the Pillars of Hercules.

The inhabitants of the Oby and Jenisea, enervated by a warmer climate, and above all, by the enjoyment of every thing they could desire, retired before a people impelled and emboldened by indigence: they withdrew to the neighbourhood of Krasnojarsk: it was there they wrought the mines, and left the traces of their social existence, discovered by M. Pallas. Still harassed by neighbouring tribes, who wanted to push forward as well as themselves, they turned towards the Caspian Sea: they found a sanctuary in the mountains of Caucasus, and in the spacious areas inclosed by their different branches: they dwelt on the second flat, of which we have already taken notice *. One division went to people the mountains of Astracan; another, the country of Tangut. All those tribes had, towards the north, the protection of the mountains; and having fortified and obstructed the passages with gates, they dwelt in ease and tranquillity. It was then that the lati-

* *Supra*, p. 239.

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tude of forty-nine degrees came to be peopled. Here, then, is the reign of the Peris, which succeeded to that of the Dives: here also is the period of Gian-ben-Gian, the monarch of the Fées; the epoch of light and prosperity, which, in process of time, was embellished by fables, because it was remote, and had become the object of regret. It was then that different languages probably sprang from the maternal and primitive tongue; it was then that astronomy was studied and cultivated; that men undertook the laborious task of measuring the earth; that they constructed astronomical tables, which time has respected, which have been preserved among the modern nations of Asia, and transmitted to us. The northern tribes, however, kept at bay by the barriers of Caucasus, at length increased in numbers and in force: they besieged and assaulted the mountains:—thus we have the wars of the Dives and Peris.

I see myself reduced, Sir, to the same embarrassment with the writers of romance, who, having conducted their prince, or hero, the length of the last volume, are at a loss how to get rid of him, and are forced to conclude by procuring his assassination. You see, that after placing my anterior people upon the second flat, and under the ramparts of Gog and Magog, I must necessarily dispose of them in one way or another, since they have ceased to exist. It is for this reason that I bring up the Atlantides, who,

under the conduct of Bacchus, or Osiris, carry the passages by force of numbers, and dissolve in a moment a great empire and the works of science *. You see why Plato, who wished to flatter the Athenians, by deriving their descent from this people, says that their ancestors made a long and brave resistance to a mighty force which emerged from the Atlantic Sea; but that, afterwards, the whole of their warriors perished in the course of a day and a night. The conquest of an empire in a day of twenty-four hours, is rather sudden; but Plato was a poet, and he wanted to enhance the importance of the event by the celerity of its achievement. Eastern nations retain the memory of this revolution. Eblis was sent by God to destroy and disperse the Dives and Peris. Eblis defeated their monarch Gian-ben-Gian in a general engagement. Among the Asiatic nations who acknowledge two causes in Nature, Eblis meant the devil, the principle of evil; but a conqueror who disturbs the peace of nations, who destroys a great people, is he not the principle of evil? Is not this allegory abundantly natural? The Orientalists say,

* The Egyptian priest, having learned that the Greeks and Egyptians derived their origin from those countries, said to Solon, as he related to him this enterprize of the northern tribes: *in the arrogance of their combined forces, they attempted to subjugate your country, ours and all the provinces situated on this side of the Pillars of Hercules where their irruption began.* In fact, those barbarians came by the south, or inlet, similar to that of which Plato speaks, and situated opposite to an island, which ought to be Nova-Zembla.

What

What is become of the people of Gian-hon-Gian? Observe to what time has reduced them.

There were certain individuals who escaped from the general destruction; such were the Brahmans, who fled for shelter and concealment among the mountains of Thibet; such was Fohi, who carried the first rays of light and science into China. But the Atlantides, having broken the line of demarcation, and forced the passage, spread themselves successively, step by step, and from age to age, over India, Phœnicia, and Egypt. In the mean time, the regions of the north providing fresh swarms, the races of Tartar and Mongul arose for new conquests. They made war upon the kings of Persia; and as they occupied the situation and country of the Dives, they came to be confounded the one with the other. The ancient history of the Persians knows nothing of the Tartars but under this name. Giamschid and his people moved southwards, and founded the empire of Persia; Fohi and his successors enlightened China, and laid the foundations of a wise and stable monarchy; while the Brahmans, descending from the mountains of Thibet, instructed the Indians, to whom they delivered the Sanscrit, with astronomical tables, of which M. De Gentil has given us a report. This, Sir, is the epoch at which the modern and known state of Asia commences.

I begin to breathe, Sir, at seeing the conclusion of this painful work. It is a matter of no small difficulty to make historians agree; to reconcile their narrative with fables; to traverse such a variety of countries, and while we cause the different nations to pass in review before us, to ascertain their ancient genealogies. You will think of this romance just what you please. I pledge myself for it no more than you; and the things which I wished to prove to you, depend in no degree upon its solidity. You seemed astonished that there should exist no notice whatever of my lost people; of a people, the authors of so many institutions, who had their residence in the north of India and Persia. You surely will not insist that I should lay the annals of this people before you. As little is it in my power to adduce you quotations from cotemporary authors, since the hand of time has erazed them from the earth. It is not easy to imagine, however, that a people who gave rise to all kinds of institutions, should be wholly forgotten; accordingly I have shewn you, in the memory of men, four, or at least two, people, who have survived the outrages of time, and who still exist in the records of tradition. When we take pains to collect those traditions, often vague and confused, we see with astonishment, that all of them aim at the same object—that is, to place the origins of things

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in the north. When we compare the Phœnicians, the Egyptians, and Greeks, with the other nations of Asia, we observe that those different nations must be the issue of two distinct races: the one is that of the Atlantides, whose name has been handed down to us; that of the other is lost: but the descendants of this race having migrated southward, carried into those regions some of their institutions, with other branches of their knowledge. M. Pallas found, under the fifty fifth degree, pretty nearly the latitude which I suggested, the relics of a people called Tschoudes, who had been destroyed, and whose stock sent off branches all the way to Finland and Hungary. Why should not this be the people who founded the sciences? It would not be easy, I should imagine, to prove the contrary: but I ought to trouble you with nothing but what I can establish in evidence, or at least in a high degree of probability. In the monuments of science I discovered a constitution of high antiquity, which barbarism has subverted and destroyed: these same monuments pointed me towards the north, as the place where I ought to explore the seat of this ruined constitution.

I here shew you, that history, tradition, and fable, unite their evidence in placing there all the origins of nations and things, and particularly the long lost Atlantides; they suggest, in the same manner, a constitution of celebrity, dear and revered in the memory,

memory, a period of power and prosperity, which gave birth to all those institutions. In this instance memory may be regarded as a sentiment; it is by this means that a sentiment of pride for past glory and success, a sentiment of veneration, and love for antiquity of birth, or origin, is cultivated and preserved. This sentiment is, of all others, the least liable to deceive us; it has its seat in the human heart, and there finds all that is necessary to cherish and keep it alive; after the lapse of fifty generations, it is the same as when first produced. But the same tradition which preserved the memory of ancient glory, preserves also the memory of loss and disaster; it refers their causes to powerful emigrations, to a flood of conquerors who poured down from the north, and who could not fail to revolutionize and ruin every thing. Such, Sir, is the suit of truths which I conceive I have discovered in ancient history, and which I submit to you in the simplicity of my heart. If you should be still of opinion that I deceive myself, that I am blinded by a prejudice of my own creation, I would entreat you to sum up the monuments of astronomy that have betrayed me into this error, the multiplicity of fables which thence derive their explanation, the coincidence of traditions and facts, which all point to the same conclusion. I would shew you the plants of India in the climate of France; elephants which have left

their

their carcasses in Siberia, while they have their offspring in the south: they seem to say to you, Man may have pursued the same route; the corn that serves to feed us, was no doubt imported along with him. Thus, it is the universe, past, as well as present, which has deceived me; and I shall conclude by addressing you in the words of Leoncius:

La voix de l'univers est, elle un prejugé *!

I am, with respect, &c.

* Vers de la Tragedie d'Irene.

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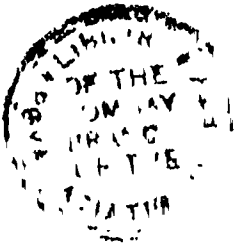

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